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# 織田信奈の野望

全国版



ファンタジア文庫



織田信奈の野望  
全圖版  
13

# 登場人物紹介 ☆ODANOBUNANNOYABOU CHARACTER

## 織田家勢力



**織田信奈**  
「天下布武」を掲げ、日ノ本統一を進める尾張の姫大名。世界を見据えた行動力・発想力を持っており、数少ない理解者の良晴に惹かれて恋仲となるが、身分の壁があり、なかなか関係が進展しない



**相良良晴**  
現代から戦国時代へとやってきた高校生。戦国ゲームで培った知識で信奈を支えているが、周囲には「サル」と呼ばれることが多く、女の子とおっぱいに目がない

### 織田家臣団

**明智光秀**  
頭脳明晰で、弱も強も得意な姫武將。通称「十兵衛」。良晴に心惹かれており、信奈と取り合っている。現在、丹波攻略中

**柴田勝家**  
織田家臣団のなかでも随一の強さを誇る姫武將。巨乳だが聡明。通称「六」

**丹羽長秀**  
信奈の参謀役として、長年織田家に仕える姫武將。人を採点する癖がある。通称「万千代」

**前田犬千代**  
勝家と並ぶ織田家の武闘派姫武將で、槍の達人。ういろうが好物でいつも食べている



### 良晴軍団

**竹中半兵衛**  
良晴に仕える軍師で、「今孔明」と渾名される天才。陰陽道にも通じている。しかし、極度の人見知り

**黒田官兵衛**  
良晴麾下の軍師。キリシタンでもあり、洗礼名は「ドン・シメオン」。半兵衛に対抗意識を燃やす

**蜂須賀五右衛門**  
良晴に付き従う忍術少女。戦闘、諜報活動などあらゆる面で活躍するが、30文字以上喋ると嘔吐欠点もある



### 協力関係



**ルイズ・フロイス**  
布教のためにジパングを訪れた宣教師。物静かで心優しく、ものすごい巨乳の持ち主

**近衛前久**  
やまと御所に仕える、お黒黒白塗りの間白。かつては織田家と対立していたが、今では良き協力者

**松平元康**  
信奈の幼なじみで、長い人質生活も経験した三河の姫武將。たぬき耳をかぶっている。通称「竹千代」

### 援護要請

## 反織田家勢力

### 武田家



**武田信玄**  
他国を次々と侵略し、「甲斐の虎」という異名を持つ姫武將。天下人の第一候補という声も上がっており、上洛を目指すため、宿敵・上杉謙信と同盟を結んで、織田家と対峙する

### 上杉家



**上杉謙信**  
義を重んじ、信奈を仇敵と定めて宣戦布告した姫武將。「越後の龍」として名高く、神がかり的な武力を持つ。毘沙門天の化身として縛られていた人生から、自らを解き放ってくれた良晴に恩いを寄せている

### 同盟

### 毛利家



**小早川隆景**  
毛利元就の娘で、「明智の将」と名高い姫武將。一時期、記憶喪失だった良晴と恋人同士だった。織田家からの良晴奪回を目指している



**吉川元春**  
毛利元就の娘で、「豪勇の将」と名高い姫武將。隆景の妹。架空の恋物語を読むのが趣味で男嫌いだが、妹の恋路を成就させるために織田家と戦う

### 大友家

**ガスパール・カブラル**  
ドミヌスのジパング支部長を務める宣教師で、大友家の顧問。日本を神の国にするという目的を持ち、なぜか信奈に執着している

**大友宗麟**  
毛利家と長年対峙してきた、豊後のキリシタン姫大名。上洛を目指す毛利家を牽制するために、信奈から要請を受けるも……?

### 対立

### 島津家



長女 **島津義久** 次女 **島津義弘** 三女 **島津歳久** 四女 **島津家久**  
薩摩・大隅に領土を持つ、四姉妹の姫武將たち。九州統一を目指しており、大友宗麟と対立している



ODA NOBUNA NO YABOU VOLUME 13

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## Prologue

In Echizen

At Kitanosho Castle

In order to corner the undefeated, invincible, and proud Uesugi Kenshin, the chief vassals of the Oda Clan had gathered.

*“My important vassals who have been supporting me are here.*

*Riku, Manchiyo, Inuchiyo, Kanjuro, Sakon and finally, Hanbei.”*

Kenshin who had pacified both Kaga and Etchuuja set up a camp at the other side of Tedorigawa

Even though her physical condition had recovered, Kenshin still did not show any signs of movement.

*“Is she trying to match her pace with Takeda Shingen? That’s impossible.”*

Kenshin’s mind couldn’t be predicted.

*“So, can I really win against Kenshin?”*

*Even Shingen can’t win against the God of War.*

*My body can’t stop shaking.”*

*“The two people whom I want to stay beside me are not here. Jubei is currently isolated in Tamba, facing the Mori Clan’s violent attacks all alone.”*

*This morning, Jubei has sent me a letter saying: “Do not worry, Nobuna-sama. Jubei is a genius and I have devised a secret plan to maintain the Tamba frontline.”*

*But when I read it, I feel unease because Jubei intends to bear all of the burdens alone.*

*After all, Jubei is quite clumsy.*

*And now, Yoshiharu has departed to make contact with Bungo’s OtomoSorin together with Harima.*

*Even though he should have arrived at Bungo by now, the ship might sink on the way.*

*Furthermore, if “Amano Iwato” should ever be opened again and sends him back to the future. Or if he loses his memories again and returns back to Kobayakawa Takakage.*

*But why? Even though it has been six months since I lost him after the Battle of Tenno Temple, I still feel anxiety and pain?*

*“\*sniff \*sniff\*, Nobuna-sama, please be at ease. Yoshiharu-san will surely be safe, and Uesugi Kenshin-sama does not wish to take advantage as Akechi-sama faces trouble, that’s why she still has not moved yet.”*

*Even though Hanbei is crying because she is worried of Yoshiharu, she is still saying those words at me. I smiled towards her, “Dearuka,” and declared:*

*“Now it is time for us to repel Takeda Shingen’s advance!”*

# Chapter 1

## Chosokabe Whaling Ship

The Sengoku Jidai – Warring State Period

Sagara Yoshiharu was currently at the Pacific Ocean

The shogun Ashikaga Yoshihi being the instigator; the Mori Clan from the west, Uesugi from the north, and Takeda from the east, these three clans had launched a pincer attack against the Oda Clan on three sides.

In order to withstand the advances of *The Second Anti-Oda Coalition Army*, Oda Nobuna with the help of the strategist Takenaka Hanbei adopted a counter strategy.

That was to incite the Otomo Clan of the Northern Kyushu to attack Mori Clan behind.

The Mori Clan had always been a longtime bitter enemy of the Otomo Clan. The first generation of the Mori Clan, *The Genius of Stratagems*, Mori Motonari once invaded the Otomo Clan, only to give up in the end.

For this powerful enemy led by Otomo Sorin. In order to establish a diplomatic relationship, Sagara Yoshiharu was accompanied by Kanbei Kuroda and Louis Frois, a missionary, to act as the representative from the Oda Clan.

Frois was participating mainly because Otomo Sorin was a devout Christian daimyo.

*“It has been a while since I was in the open sea. I hope I won’t get seasickness so that we can pass through the Seto Inland Sea easily.”*

*“Oh, Sagara Yoshiharu, you should get accustomed to it soon. Because the Murakami Navy has gained control on the west side of the Seto Inland Sea, it is impossible for us to pass through it. So we have no choice but to pass through the south of Shikkoku Island to arrive at Hyuga Province in Southern Kyushu. Once we arrive, this brilliant Simon will persuade Otomo Sorin to enter to an alliance with the Oda Clan.”*

Back at Azuchi, Nobuna created a policy that would allow any heir of a daimyo to study in Kyushu. Such was the result of Nobuna’s keen insight.

While standing on the deck and holding a rosary, *“Let this journey be safe,”* Louis said and nodded. *“Since it will take time to travel the sea on this path, it may be impossible to conclude the alliance in two weeks and make the Otomo Clan to attack the Mori after that. But I believe Akechi-sama would still be able to hold on until January when she is isolated in Tamba.”*

As Kanbei sat down and took a binocular, swinging it around alongside her legs like a bored child, she complained to Yoshiharu.

*“Muu, it’s boring until we arrive at Kyushu. And it’s boring without my rival Hanbei around for me to bully. Well then, Sagara Yoshiharu, I shall teach you the situation in Kyushu!”*

*“Actually, as a fan of Sengoku wars, I more or less roughly know what state Kyushu is currently in this period. Kyushu is divided into 3 major factions: Otomo Sorin of Bungo Province, the Shimazu Clan of Satsuma, and, finally, the rebellious Ryuzoji Clan of Hizen. As a Catholic, Otomo Sorin has a good relationship with the Namban people. On the other hand, the Shimazu Clan who hates Christianity wishes to unite the three provinces Satsuma, Oosumi, and Hyuga in order to defeat the Otomo Clan, as Ryuzoji will show their aggressiveness in the near future.”*

*“Sim. It will not be enough to just enter an alliance with the Otomo. But we also need to prevent both the Shimazu and Ryuzoji from attacking the Otomo Clan. However, we already sent another diplomat; they should be able to finish their job. Because Ryuzoji’s strength is inferior to the other 2 clans, they would wish to strike them both once they weaken. If we are able to persuade Otomo Sorin then our duty would be complete.”*

*“We sent another representative? Was there anyone left in Oda who could’ve been sent to Kyushu?”*

*“Sagara Yoshiharu, you are a fool. Listen to me and take a good look at this map of Kyushu.”* Kanbei spread out a map that showed the position of the Kyushu clans on top of a Namban desk.

The one who had the biggest territory was Otomo Sorin who had covered the Bungo, Chikuzen, Buzen, and Chikugo Provinces. Ryuzoji dominated most of Hizen while the Arima Clan ruled by the first Christian daimyo and the Omura Clan lied in the southern part. These two last clans had maintained its existence by having a good trading relationship with the Namban.

There was the Aso Clan from the Northern Higo and Sagara Clan from the Southern Higo. These two are currently allied with the Otomo Clan.

The Ito Clan that lied on Hyuga Province, and finally the Shimazu Clan that ruled over the Satsuma and Oosumi Provinces.

Since it had 9 provinces, it was named Kyushu [nine provinces].

*“There is a Sagara Clan that has the same name as mine? Well, it wasn’t a rare name anyway.”*

*“Now Shimazu is trying to drive out the Ito Clan from Hyuga. Since Hyuga originally belonged to the Shimazu Clan. Otomo Sorin also tried to build a Christian kingdom in Hyuga,*

*the so-called 'Kingdom of God.' Since Shimazu is an anti-Christian faction, they won't let Hyuga fall into the Otomo Clan's hands. Since the first emperor of Japan, Emperor Jimmu who had descended from Amaterasu, led his first expedition from the Hyuga Province. The Sagara Clan in South Higo who was adjacent to both Satsuma and Hyuga Provinces would probably be involved on this battle as well."*

*"Yoshiharu-san, it seems that Kyushu has a different situation compared to Zipang's main island [Honshu]. I have never seen such a belligerent country just like Kyushu before. We should put more observation on it now."*

*"Just like Frois has said, Kyushu is filled with conflicts even more than in Honshu since the ancient times and still continues unto this day. During those times exists such a powerful native people of Southern Kyushu called Kumaso or Hayato. There is also Dazaifu garrisoned in the other side of the continent who is in charge in governing the state."*

*When the Mongolian army broke in and tried to invade Kyushu, the continent got separated into two sides, and battles keep breaking out ever since then. The war still continued even before and during the Onin Wars. Because of this, many people were so accustomed to it that the men of Kyushu are called "Shura," and many boys start to wield spears and take up arms in battlefields when they are 7 years old."*

*"Even though you said 'Shura,' there are also princess generals, right?"*

*"In Kyushu, many men die before the age of 20! That is why there are many princess generals as well. But there is basically no distinction between a male and a female as a Shura in Kyushu. No one's life would be spared even if they turn into a monk. Even if it is a princess general, any loss to a battle would result in capital punishment. In fact there is no princess general who would be caught as a prisoner! They would rather take their own lives rather than to live in shame! Such is the way of a Shura."*

Furthermore, because they used a lot of arquebuses in their battles, there was a high chance for a princess general to die within a battlefield. Kanbei added more information.

*"To think that such thing could happen," Yoshiharu muttered in epiphany.*

*"If a girl is captured then she would be beheaded immediately? What joke is this? For such thing to happen."*

*"It is something that happens due to battles that occurred for centuries, so it can't be helped. The reason why the delicate Otomo Sorin converted to Christianity is because she can't endure the hellish way of a Shura in Kyushu while managing the clan's external and internal problems."*

*"Otomo Sorin is a delicate girl?"*

*“Otomo Sorin is a girl whom you definitely would like since she is a very beautiful and big-breasted girl. Despite having such a capricious personality, she is a genius and motivated person comparable to Nobuna. She has repelled Mori Motonari from advancing to Kyushu, though currently she has fallen into depression, locking herself in her mansion and refusing to come out and fight. If she did not have that problem, she could have pacified Kyushu or at least conquered the Ryuzoji Clan by now. And she also has a lot of strong generals as her subordinates.”*

*“Eh, what? Big b-b-breasts you said? How big are they compared to Frois?”*

*“Hmm, ah, I think it is the same size as Frois.”*

*“That is too big. There is no way that she would be a Japanese girl. That would be ridiculous!”*

*“As expected of Yoshiharu-san; the conversation has diverted into a topic about breasts,” Frois muttered shyly.*

*“Otomo-sama may have started to believe in Christianity in order to fill the lack of innocence in her heart. By having God’s blessing, she wants to fix her unstable mind.”*

However, Frois started to talk in a low voice.

*“The new head of the missionary association of Zipang that is dispatched to Kyushu, Gaspard-sama. Even though he is also a missionary, he has a different agendum compared to Xavier-sama who made visit to this country. Gaspard-sama is now acting as the strategist of the Otomo Clan and has been corrupting the clan from within gradually.”*

*“Military strategist? That person? Is he the one who picked one of the three sacred treasures, Yasakani Magatama, from the depth of the Seto Inland Sea and gave it to Gamo in order to send me back to the future?”*

*“Yes, the missionary association is currently being divided into two factions. One is the one who is following the footstep of Xavier. They wish to spread the teachings of Christianity to every country in the world. The second one is the Conquistador that works together with the Spanish and Portuguese governments and merchants in order to set up a colony in other countries.*

*Xavier-sama believes that it is impossible to send the Spanish Armada in order to defeat Zipang’s samurai because of the latter’s progress in adapting to the use of large amount of arquebuses in battle even more so than in Europe but...”*

*“So this Gaspard belongs to the latter faction, Frois-chan?”*

*“Yes, unfortunately so.”*

With an optimistic attitude, Kanbei effusively said, *“Don’t think too much of it, a Samurai is not someone so lenient,”* and laughed.

*“Frois, it’s impossible for the Namban to invade Japan. The distance in the sea is too wide for their navy to sail across. The land route is blocked by the Ottoman Empire. And in here, the Oda, Otomo, and Shimazu Clan’s armies have been fully equipped with the Namban’s technology and weaponry.”*

*If Japan would ever be united, it would without a doubt become the de facto strongest military state in the world. It’s different compared to Luzon which has been conquered by the Spanish or Malacca by the Portuguese. Don’t worry.”*

Wrong; Gaspard-sama already knew that it’s impossible to occupy Zipang with a military expedition. That is why he has devised a frightening method. Frois said while trembling.

*“Gaspard-sama intends to use the power of faith to manipulate the heart of the people. No matter how many arquebuses or katanas they have, once their faith has been converted, all people could easily be manipulated like a puppet.”*

*And once he gets the influence of this country’s king, it will be easy to convert Zipang into a Christian country, and finally Gaspard-sama could get a grasp on the nation’s military power.”*

*“Seems to be a pretty nasty enemy to face against, Frois-chan.”*

*“Gaspard-sama is also a scholar who is well-educated of the west and east’s ancient civilization. He used the sacred treasure which had been forgotten by the people in order to achieve his ambition. Although he had been captured by the Murakami Navy before, he tricked them to salvage one of the treasures from the depths of the sea.”*

*“Gamo Ujisato is a scholar who also likes to learn about the ancient civilization. Even now she is still investigating the myth behind the Shrine of Izumo.”*

*“His only miscalculation was that he did not expect Nobuna-sama to have a strong will to refuse using Amano-Iwato to make herself a god and to instead kiss Yoshiharu, as well as Shimazu Clan of Satsuma’s being too resilient in their forces. If it were a success, he would’ve replaced Yoshiharu-san’s position to become Nobuna-sama’s closest military advisor.”*

*“The tactic to manipulate the people’s hearts...that is something that Kanbei is poor at. Furthermore, he is a man whom I have no knowledge about. My future knowledge which is my only weapon is useless now.” Yoshiharu’s body tensed.*

*“He is the military adviser of the Otomo Clan. And it seems that he already has captivated Sorin’s heart by now. Will he move the biggest military forces in Kyushu in order to enter a decisive battle against the Shimazu Clan?”*

*“Perhaps. Because he intends to found a kingdom of God in Kyushu. But the Shimazu Clan who keeps guarding against the Namban’s invasion would never agree with the Christian missionary works. Gaspard would need to annihilate Shimazu in order to make Zipang into a Christian nation.”*

*“Then, because of my scandal with Nobuna that would hinder Tenka Fubu, he incited Gamo Ujisato to sent me back to future?”*

*“I think that, since you are the man who knows the future of Zipang, he thinks of you as a hindrance to his ambition.”*

*“Such a man exists, huh? But why did he not decide to just kill me then?”*

*“In front of the people, if Nobuna-sama opened Amano-Iwato, the scandal with Yoshiharu-san would’ve disappeared and the people would’ve believed that Nobuna-sama was the second incarnation of Amaterasu-Ookami of this country. If such a miracle happened, the whole country should’ve been unified in one body.”*

*“Unify the nation without using military strength but instead through the people’s mind and faith, huh? I can’t seem to disagree with his method, but I wonder how the European people are so familiar with Japan’s mythology? Could he possibly be a person like me who came from the future? That’s very strange.”*

*“Yes, it is strange for the Namban to know about the secret of the three sacred treasures and to achieve the Yasakani-Magatama even earlier than me Simon. It’s very confusing,”*  
Kanbei nodded. Kanbei once visited the Mori Clan to look for the treasure which had been buried deep below the Seto Inland Sea.

*“Yes, he is a man full of mystery.”*

*“I would have wished for a cultural exchange. But Nobuna has her own wishes - to bring an end to this land’s war-torn history. I don’t think I want to see a future where Nobuna turns this country into a colony of the Spanish Empire.”*

So he is a Namban strategist, huh? I wish to match my wits against him sometimes. If I win against him, Simon should be the best strategist in the world. Said Kanbei happily.

*“You are in a good mood,”* Yoshiharu patted Kanbei’s head, followed by a kick from the latter.

*“I’m sorry, Yoshiharu-san. Missionary activities have always contained contradiction. Before his death, Xavier –sama also fell into anguish upon knowing this fact. However, if we didn’t try to expand our missionary activities to foreign countries, the Conquistador would’ve used this as a chance to advance their military expansion and create a colony. Once, the Aztec*

*Empire located in the New Continent was destroyed mercilessly by España. Even the Incan Empire is on the verge of collapse. Some parts of them have already been destroyed...”*

*“It’s not Frois’s fault. In this country, military activities and missionary works are separate things. This is what Nobuna has decided upon”.*

Gamo Ujisato yearned for her sister, Nobuna, yet she was still a child who couldn’t understand the love of a man and a woman. I thought it was a dirty thing yet it wasn’t. Kanbei nodded as she was convinced by this fact.

*“You need to pay more attention, Kanbei. This man Gaspard is a very eloquent man. He knows how to use people’s faith and manipulate them like a puppet. He is a very dangerous and difficult enemy for you to challenge. Furthermore, he has a lot of knowledge that I do not know.”*

*“Muu, how rude, Sagara Yoshiharu! It is impossible for me Simon to be fooled by a foreigner like him! I told you that Otomo Sorin is a friend of mine! Just leave everything to me!”*

However, at that moment, the situation changed.

Something felt strange. Kanbei took up her telescope and furrowed her eyebrows. *“It’s an enemy attack!”*

Just as the Oda diplomatic convoy passed through Tosa, a fleet of black pirate ships – it was more suitable to call them “whaling vessels” – had launched a barrage.

*“What is going on? The Murakami Navy should not be able to pass through this sea!”* Kanbei shouted while holding her hat and swaying her fan.

*“Sagara Yoshiharu! They threw a rain of harpoons towards us!”.*

*“Are they really pirates? Their ships are clad in iron. But that would make them heavy and thus inoperable for long distance traveling. They should have used light vessels for speed instead, but is there any demerit in using one?”*

*“Muu. Their ships’ sails have the symbol of seven-leaf creeping wood sorrel! It’s the symbol of the Chosokabe Clan from the Tosa Province!”*

*“Chosokabe should have been busy in unifying Shikoku! Why are they hindering us?”*

*“They seem to be trying to catch a whale. It looks like a poaching ship.”*

*“I think they will ask for a fee to pass through just like the Murakami. Yoshiharu-san, I shall go there as a representative.”*

*“No, Frois-chan, it is dangerous! I should go there instead! It’s time for me to show my experience from my training with the Murakami Pirates.”*

*“Be careful, Sagara Yoshiharu! This island belongs to Chosokabe and is outside of Oda Nobuna’s jurisdiction! I don’t know what they will do to you!”*

*“Kanbei, I have the providence of the sea goddess. Even if I have women trouble, I shouldn’t have any trouble in the sea. It will be alright!”*

Yoshiharu jumped out from the deck, descended to a small boat, and rowed it to the black ship all by himself.

However, Yoshiharu wouldn’t be able to negotiate with the Chosokabe.

From the deck of the whaling ship until its mast and hull, everything is colored black. Suddenly an old-looking harpoon was thrown over to Yoshiharu’s boat.

“Woah, that is close! Hey, I’m not a whale!”

Yoshiharu barely avoided it, yet the harpoon suddenly took a turn upright and struck the boat as if it was a mast. And then.....

“Has the tide changed? Wait a second! The ship is not going to where I want it to be! Did the harpoon change the balance of the boat?”

The boat that changed its course suddenly began to move further from the Oda’s and Chosokabe’s fleets.

*“This is a lie. I must pull out the spear immediately...but if I do, the boat would sink. Should I dive to the ocean instead?”*

However at that time, a big wave hit the boat violently, and Yoshiharu fell over.

Even though Yoshiharu had experience in Murakami Pirates’ ships, it was the first time he experienced such a huge wave.

*“I don’t understand what is happening! Have I lost the protection from the sea goddess?”* By the time that the boat stabilized, the land and the other ship could no longer be seen from the distance.

A long distance formed since the last time the accident had happened.

Sagara Yoshiharu missed his chance to jump out from the boat and lost in the sea.

Naturally, troubles began to stir on Kanbei Kuroda and others inside the ship.

*“What the heck is that spear? Sagara Yoshiharu got hit by it and got away from us in such high speed. We could not even catch up to him.”*

*“Although it’s impossible to ascertain; could it be an ancient treasure just like the 3 sacred treasures, Simon-san?”*

*“Yes, it is that! Chosokabe has used the ‘Hebihirei!’”*

*“Hebihirei?”*

*“Although I only heard rumors when I was looking for the Magatama in the Seto Inland Sea and never saw it myself...but in ancient times, it was one of the very old 10 sacred treasures that was lost from the history of Japan. Hibeirei is a sacred treasure that can manipulate sea waves and turn the direction of ships. It does not sink the ship since it won’t pierce it but merely stick on the ship’s deck. But because sailors never knew about the existence known as Hebihirei, the spear would stick unto the ship deck since no one dared to pull it, being afraid of sinking. And so the spear could continue to drive the ship freely.”*

Once long ago in Yamato [ancient Japan], stood several extinct kingdoms such as the Izumo and Kibi Kingdoms and many other domains. There were several sacred treasures that were different from the three sacred treasures owned by the Yamato-Gosho. These treasures were known as the 10 heretical sacred treasures - Shinpo. They were recorded in the “Chronicles of Japan,” of course scattered around, and got lost. Kanbei folded her arms and thought in annoyance.

*“So why is one of such treasures ended up in Shikkoku to be owned by the Chosokabe?”*

*“The snake is considered as a symbol of the sea god. It could be that Hebihirei was hidden at the Itsukushima Shrine in Miyajima which is dedicated in serving the water god, Benzaiten [Japanese Buddhist goddess who originated from Sarasvati]. Or it could have lied within the Seto Inland Sea as well. Kobayakawa Takakage must have found it and handed it over to Chosokabe.”*

However, Kobayakawa Takakage was not a woman who would use this kind of tool. In fact, she didn’t use it to win the precedent Battle of Kizugawaguchi. Kanbei couldn’t find a good reason for it.

*“Putting aside the Mori Clan, Kobayakawa Takakage is a realistic woman who will not use methods like that. She holds the principle to win over battle by using the strength of the people without using god’s power. Her ideal is similar to Oda Nobuna. Otherwise she would not have the wisdom necessary to make a clear decision as a fine military commander on her own. The man from the future Sagara Yoshiharu is a separate matter though. But is this really how it is?”*

In fact that spear was not one of the sacred treasures. Once it was used, its spiritual energy would disappear. Why use such a trump card just for Yoshiharu? Kanbei growled in incomprehension. Frois nodded, *“I see.”*

*“Isn’t the reason simple. Because Miss Kobayakawa loves Yoshiharu-san, she would bend her principle, use it to solve the problem and take things to her advantage without killing him. After all, love is a powerful thing that transcends reasoning and every principle.”*

Really? Is love such a powerful weapon? To think that a cold-blooded woman would bow before the power of love. Kanbei sighed.

*“Yes it is. There is no other power stronger than the power of love.”*

*“In other words, using the Hebihirei will drive Sagara Yoshiharu away to a distant land without killing him? Even so, we need to get Sagara Yoshiharu back. If Oda Nobuna hears this, she would fly into rage, and I’d lose my job immediately.”*

*“Although it’s just my personal feeling but we cannot deny such a possibility. Sometimes love can take away people’s rationality. But I think Miss Kobayakawa is a thoughtful person so I think it will be alright. She did not use the spear in the last battle and insisted on using human potential to fight Nobuna-sama.”*

*“Uwaaah! I do not understand such a thing! I, Simon, do not understand the concept of love! Hey, all of you! Chosokabe’s ship has disappeared. Now it’s time to search for Sagara Yoshiharu’s boat right now! Go and search it!”*

Kanbei and the other tried to follow the traces from where Yoshiharu had drifted to, but due to a huge wave he was already completely out of their sight. *“Sagara Yoshiharu! The boat will not sink even if you pull out the spear! So pull it out now,”* she shouted several times to the sea yet Yoshiharu already disappeared. Yoshiharu did not hear any of it.

And thus Sagara Yoshiharu was lost in the coast of Tosa.

## Chapter 2

### The Country of Sagara Yoshiharu

*“Land! I see land! I’m saved!”*

*How many days has it been since I drifted on the sea?*

Sagara Yoshiharu fell into the sea after having been attacked by Chosokabe Motochika and being separated from Kanbei Kuroda and the rest while surviving vigorously by fishing fishes and collecting raindrops for drinking.

It was all thanks to the training as a pirate under the Murakami Navy. Yet to handle the incident with the experience of a pirate, Niwa Nagahide scored it 50 points.

*‘It’s weird that the ship didn’t change its course even after I rowed it for many times, but I have finally arrived on a land. But where is this place?’*

The boat that Sagara Yoshiharu used slipped between larger Japanese-styled ships and docked in the harbor.

*“How strange it is that the spear stuck on the deck...if I pulled it, the seawater would have leaked in; but it’s too rusty to be used as a weapon, yet...”*

If he pulled out the spear, an inscription written on its tip stating, “\*\*\*”, to which this boat will drift to,” would have been visible. But Yoshiharu didn’t know that.

Sagara Yoshiharu disembarked the ship and then was suddenly surrounded by fishermen and merchants.

*“Are you a Namban missionary?”*

*“No, he is not a missionary! He looks like a monkey! He must be an intruder from the country of monkeys!”*

*“He’s a spy from another country! Seize him!”*

*“No! Wait, please, I may look like one but I am actually-”*

*“What did you say? If there is an unexpected outsider who came to this place then it’d be natural to capture them!”*

*“That’s quite a sturdy body, suitable enough to pass as a fisherman.”*

*“Wait, I’m not a spy. I have a proof to vindicate it!”*

*“Take him to the market; they sell a collar for monkeys.”*

Sagara Yoshiharu tried to take the letter of negotiation from Nobuna for Otomo Sorin from his bosom. *But I just have noticed it! I don't have the letter with me!* It was on Kanbei.

*“How suspicious. But I think I have seen this man before.”*

*“His skin is tanned just like a pirate. Did you come to this harbor for scouting? You are going to be a slave then.”*

*“I'm not a pirate; I'm a messenger from the Oda Clan. Because I got drifted on the sea, my skin is tanned. Please bring me to your lord.”*

Yoshiharu desperately pleaded to them. Fishermen were hostile against foreigners, but that was only because there was a war erupting here and there. In fact, they were actually a good-natured people. They were willing to talk with good faith.

*“You want to see the princess? What do you want to do?”*

*“If you are a messenger from the Oda Clan then tell us your name!”* It seems my plea has worked. Yoshiharu breathed a sigh of relieve.

*“Hehehe. Don't get surprise. My name is Sagara Yoshiharu. I have the honorary title “Chikuzen no Kami.” I am a general of the Oda Clan.”*

*“Yoshiharu...?”*

*“Yes, I am Sagara Yoshiharu! I'm not a monkey.”*

*“GO TO HELL, YOU FAKE!”*

The angry fishermen simultaneously attacked Yoshiharu from all sides.

*“Ouch, ouch! Hey, I'm not a fake! I am the real Sagara Yoshiharu!”*

*“STILL DARE BEING SO STUBBORN?!”*

*“HOW COULD A BANDIT ASSUME THE NAME OF OUR HIME-SAMA!”*

*“HIME-SAMA WHOM WE LOOK UP TO DOES NOT HAVE A MONKEY FACE LIKE YOU!”*

*“Wait? Hime-sama? Who?”*

*“It's our Hime-sama, a beautiful person who is both noble and more beautiful than anyone else.”*

*“Why say beautiful twice?”*

*“Because it is important, we said it twice!”*

*“Everyone respects our Hime-sama, Sagara Yoshiharu.”*

*“Eh, wait a second. Sagara... Yoshiharu? She has the same name as mine?! Does that mean that, because of the time slip, I was born as a girl? Me?”* [Mario-san: Saru's Yoshiharu = よしはる, which can also be read as Yoshihi or Yoshiharu, but with different kanji spelling]

*“Nonsense again?”*

*If you try to imitate Hime-sama then at least wear a female clothing! You made a mess to our Hime-sama's image!* But when the fisherman cried and was about to throw Yoshiharu to the sea,

*“Oh-oh oh-oh oh!”*

*“Wait! Everyone, please wait. That man is not my sister's imposter; he is a general of the Oda Clan. When Imano-Iwato opened, I saw his face.”*

A girl with a bamboo spear in one hand while riding a small black Asian bear protected him.

She looked about the same age as Yoshiharu. Because she was a princess general, her hair was cut short about the same length as Yoshiharu's. She dressed up with clothes appropriate to be worn by a wild child just like Inuchiyo, only with bear skin instead.

She was an attractive girl who had a light brown hair with bright eyes and wore a cheerful smile like a sunflower.

*“Muu! A mountain bear has come out with a mountain monkey!”*

*“It's the person who secluded herself in the mountain to practice with a bear!”*

*“Shoo, shoo! We will give you fish so please don't make a ruckus in the harbor.”*

*“Not anymore. Please don't mistake me as a bear. I don't attack violently unless there is an enemy or when I'm starved to death.”*

*“The fact is, to constantly act violently when starving...”*

*“How should we put it, the fact that you are riding a bear is...”*

*“I'm not a mountain monkey. Ah my name is Tokuchiyo.”* In front of the fishermen, she made a cheerful laugh.

*“Everyone, listen up. A traveler shouldn’t be captured and tortured in my sister’s country; it would tarnish my sister reputation. That’s why I shall bring him to my sister.”*

*Oh! The mountain monkey intruded into another person’s problem and sent him to talk with Hime-sama... The trembling fishermen left Yoshiharu behind and returned to fishing.*

Yoshiharu was saved at last by the wild girl.

*“Well, that was a dangerous one. They are actually good people. But the recent war has made them grow angry. Please forgive them.”*

*“No, thank you instead. So your name is Tokuchiyo-chan, is it?”*

*“Yes. And this one over here is Inuwarashi. I became his friend when he was still a baby bear back then in the mountain. I was starving and was forced to fight with other bears. I’m sorry that I could only cry when eating the bear’s meat. But this child came from a different bear. So I took him as my family.”* [the translator took his liberty on altering the sentence to the general public’s understanding]

*“Ah!”*

It seemed to have taken a liking to humans so Inuwarashi just wanted to pat Yoshiharu for once. Even though it was just a light tap, Yoshiharu’s shoulder seemed to have been dislocated as the result.

*“You gave him a dog’s name even though it’s a bear? Nevertheless, to fight other powerful competitors just to survive; is the law of the wild this harsh?”*

*“Even though I secluded myself in order to train at the Yatsuhiko Mountain, I’m actually the younger sister of the princess who rules this country. Sagara Yoshiharu-san, welcome to Sagara Yoshiharu’s country!!”* [check the previous note about their orthographic difference]

*“Sagara Yoshiharu’s country?”*

*“Yes. And this place is located in Southern Higo. My elder sister rules from the Hitoyoshi Castle in the Kuma District. She is the eighteenth head of the Sagara Clan, Sagara Yoshihi.*

*She is both a beautiful and noble princess who is adored as a bright sun in the Higo and Kuma Regions. It is also a coincidence that I was born in the same day as her.”*

*“So you both are twins?”*

*“Wrong! She is the previous lord’s legitimate daughter. I was an illegitimate child born from the lord’s concubine. But I was born in the same day as her. This must be fate!”*

*“Oh, I see. She is another “Sagara Yoshiharu” then. Her name Yoshi is written as “Sense of Honor” from “Righteousness” and Haru as “Solar” from “Sun;” together they form Sagara Yoshiharu. Sagara YO.SHI.HA.RU. then!”*

*“It can also be read as Yoshihi but the people here call her Yoshiharu. So then, are you a messenger to Otomo Sorin?”*

*“Yes, although I met an accident and got drifted to West Kyushu.”*

*“Good. My sister is allied with Otomo Sorin. If you ask her, you might meet Otomo Sorin safely. So now. I will take you to Hitoyoshi Castle. By escorting you, I can meet my sister now.”*

*“Meet?”*

*“I am forbidden from seeing my sister. Although I am a monk, sister was angry that I took training in using a spear and selfishly left to seclude myself from others. But if I bring you with me, she would be happy.”*

Because there was a legitimate elder sister born to succeed the family heritage, the illegitimate younger sister was not needed and thus was sent to the mountain. But she was a cheerful child; Yoshiharu could feel his heart get healed just by seeing her smile.

*I wonder if Inuchiyo is healthy. Back then, she had starved, almost to death, after her exile from the Oda Clan and wandered around the mountains. And then she just came back, wearing a tiger clothing.*

*Although it is our first meeting, does she know who I was after watching Amano-Iwato?*

Tokuchiyo laughed on top of her bear along the Kuma River. Yoshiharu tilted his head, *“Even though it is my first time meeting her, I feel like I have known her for a long time. But where have I meet her before?”*

Back then in the harbor when Yoshiharu saw Tokuchiyo’s “monkey smile,” he felt some familiarity from that smile and thus felt so confused right now. [note it for the possibility of being a foreshadowing to a revelation in the future]

Hitoyoshi Castle is the residence of the Sagara Clan and is located on the upper stream of Kuma River.

After walking from Yatsuhiro Port and advancing through the banks of Kuma Mountain’s river, the Hitoyoshi Castle finally came into view.

*“Oh, there is a monkey riding on top of a bear.....geeeh, it’s Tokuchiyo?!”*

*“Hime-sama is in a bad mood now but you still look energetic!”*

*“...So did you get into a trouble after picking up a traveler again?”*

*“Even though I am a child of the Sagara Clan, I am still just an illegitimate child. Even so, I still adore my sister. Aah, my sister is so amazing!”*

*“I feel relieved just by seeing this smile which is like a sunflower.”*

Even though Tokuchiyo seemed to be neglected by her elder sister, she did not seem to mind much about it. All of the surrounding vassals got attracted to her naïve personality.

*“Everyone, thank you for your hard work! I have come to meet my elder sister! I have brought an important guest from the Oda Clan. Please quickly make the preparation for an audience.”*

Yoshiharu and Tokuchiyo were brought into the “Audience Room” of the Hitoyoshi Castle. Inuwarashi was kept outside of course.

*“Tokuchiyo-san brought upon an impostor in front of Hime-sama,”* the vassals felt troubled about this, but giving courteous treatment to a guest was a tradition in this Shura country, Kyushu, and thus began to prepare a feast immediately.

Yoshiharu asked, *“Although there are still many people fighting, is Kyushu actually a peaceful country?”* Tokuchiyo answered with a smile.

*“Even though it may appear like this, the people in Hitoyoshi Castle are tensed right now, since there is an important battle ahead of us!”*

*“Battle?”*

*“The Sagara Clan is currently in a fierce feud with the Shimazu Clan. So my sister made an alliance with the Ito Clan from Hyuga Province whom we had been previously hostile against. The Ito Clan and Shimazu Clan have been hostile to each other for almost 150 years.”*

*“Forming an alliance with the Ito Clan to fight against the Shimazu Clan?”*

*“Yes. Thanks to the technology of mass producing Tanegashima, the Shimazu Clan’s power has increased rapidly. Some territories in Satsuma that we used to own have been taken by the Shimazu. If we do not ally ourselves with the Ito Clan to suppress their invasion, we would be annexed by the Shimazu Clan.”*

*“They have been battling each other for 150 years? The history of this Shura country is very different indeed. They have begun even before the Onin War...”*

*“Ah, my hands are itching. If only I can come out as the general – although I have no other skills, I have had sōjutsu training from the mountain – how I wish I could help my sister.”*

Tokuchiyo laughed and clenched her fist, “I’m eager to try!” The old retainer from the back shouted loudly.

*“Hime-sama has arrived!”*

*“Ahh, elder sister, long time no see!”*



*“...Tokuchiyo, I have already said it many times that you could not set foot upon the Hitoyoshi Castle ever again. Grandfather has forbidden you to become a samurai. Go back and continue your monk training in Yatsuhiko.”*

*“Indeed, grandfather has told me so. But I still wish to become a general. I have trained my spear skill and can search for my own supplies. So please let me go to the battlefield!”*

*“You are still a foolish imoutou. Rejected! I dislike your request. Grandfather’s will is absolute. You should just go back and spend your remaining years back at Yatsushiro. War in Kyushu is not some kind of a game.”*

*“Because it isn’t a game that I wish to help you, elder sister.”*

*“I refuse. I don’t like it at all. In fact, I don’t trust the clan and my family. Since you were born from a different mother, isn’t it obvious that you wish to revolt against me someday?”*

*“Uuh, elder sister...”*

Sagara Yoshihi lazily sat upon the head seat while lowering her back and looked down at both her sister and Yoshiharu.

*“Welcome, the fake Sagara Yoshiharu who came from the future. I am the lord of the Southern Higo Province. I am the real Sagara Yoshiharu.”*

Sagara Yoshihi was a beautiful and noble princess general. It was surprising to see that she had a thin waist and arm with a fair body.

She was a beautiful princess whose manners were elegant and beautiful-looking just like Nobuna’s. As expected from the 18<sup>th</sup> head of a distinguished clan in Kyushu.

Even though she was an elegant and neat girl who extremely contrasted her sister Tokuchiyo who looked like a wild child, they still had some resemblances to each other as sisters. She and Tokuchiyo were quite similar.

Thanks to the heritage of the Kumaso, Hayato, and Satsuma people blood in their lineage, many beautiful women in Kyushu had beautiful eyes and good-looking face, Yoshiharu suddenly realized this.

*“Are you Sagara Yoshihi? You are quite different from the one whom I know. I expect you to be more like a general-looking type just like Tokuchiyo.”*

*“Wait. You are being rude. Do not call my name like that. Call me Yoshihi-sama.”*

*Elder sister has always appeared proud when meeting someone for the first time to avoid bad impression, Tokuchiyo suddenly remembered.*

*“Even if we are a small feudal clan which is a vassal to the Otomo Clan, the Sagara Clan is the descendant of the distinguished Kamakura Noble Family. However, this person does know anything like this at all. Tokuchiyo, a messenger from a clan shouldn’t be this impolite. It is execution for him!”*

*“Execution... Please wait; sister, Yoshiharu-san is not useless. Please bow to my sister, please!”*

*“I understand, I will try. Cough-cough. \*The Curse of Goemon\*... Ahh, it’s useless! It feels as if I were possessed by Goemon.”*

Seeing that when Tokuchiyo lined up, the number of monkeys seemed to have been increased by two; Sagara Yoshihi sighed in dejection.

*“Elder sister. He also used the same tone when he was speaking to Oda Nobuna. Since he was born as a commoner, he does not understand etiquette. Kinda similar to me, hahaha.”*

*“Now that when you mentioned it, I have yet to receive a serious scolding from Nobuna when I use this kind of tone. But if I make her angry, my head would still be cut off immediately.”*

*“Hmph. So you were spoiled by your master? It can’t be helped; I shall allow you to speak with that tone of you. Seriously. What on earth did the Oda Clan educate you with...”*

*“Well, I was just a high school student before.”*

*“Wow. To think that you would use such a carefree tone without hesitation. Oh, yes, I remembered it. When Amano-Iwato was opened, were you the one who got romantically involved with Oda Nobuna? Let alone being a commoner, your status as a man from the future is doubtful. You also look like a monkey. But this noble me will never be in a relationship with a man. In other words, you came from the lineage of my stupid younger sister.”*

*“You have a sharp tongue, don’t you? Putting me aside, you use the same way of talking to Tokuchiyo, your own sister?”*

*“What is it? Do you feel unsatisfied of it? As for me, I agree with being lenient to your vassal and the people of your territory while being strict to the person who calls himself Sagara or anyone whose birth came from our family. Especially to Tokuchiyo. Take note of this.”*

*“Why be so strict with your family?”*

*“Such thing does not concern you. Even if you impolitely introduce yourself as a Sagara, you are not one of us.”*

*“But Tokuchiyo-chan admires you. Why can’t you stop pushing her away?”*

*“Shut up. A mere guest should not interrupt a problem of our clan. Sagara Yoshiharu, you and Tokuchiyo are similar. Both of you are loud and like to intrude into other people’s businesses without realizing your own situation. It feels unpleasant.”*

*If you did belong to our clan, I would behead you immediately.* Sagara Yoshihi narrowed her eyes.

*“By the way, Tokuchiyo, how long are you going to keep staying in here?”*

*“Well. The soldiers have gathered at the castle in preparation against the Shimazu Clan. Sister, please let me participate in the war.”*

*“Don’t be stupid. Go back to Yatsushiro. I will protect grandfather’s will as the 18<sup>th</sup> head of the clan. You will never be allowed to live as a samurai. If you enter the war without permission, I will break our relationship as siblings and exile you from Yatsushiro. Do you want it?”*

*Elder sister...* Tokuchiyo dropped her shoulder for the first time since they had arrived.

*“Yoshiharu-san, because I am here, your conversation with my sister won’t continue. I will go back to Yatsushiro. See you again. Will we ever see each other again?”*

*“Oh, oh, I’m sorry. Even though you are being so kind to me, I cannot help you at all.”*

*“No, it’s alright. If you ever have a problem, just visit Yatsushiro. Strange isn’t it? Even though we just have known each other, it does not feel like this is our first time meeting each other.”*

*“Tokuchiyo. Even though I don’t understand the circumstances of the Sagara Clan; your elder sister does not dislike you seriously. If she did, she would’ve exiled you or beheaded you in the worst cases. She sent you back to Yatsushiro to avoid losing you while keeping her true feeling.”*

*“I see...so that’s how it is! Thank you, Yoshiharu-san! To be honest, I was feeling depressed just now but your words have given me strength.”*

*“A mere guest. Don’t say such unnecessary things to my sister because you’ll make this foolish sister get worked up. You are saying that you can understand what I feel even though it is our first time meeting each other. It’s disgusting.”*

*“I’m off, sister, and Yoshiharu-san.”* Tokuchiyo smiled and went away from the hall. *She is really such a good child, but her sister despises her so much?* Yoshiharu felt puzzled.

*“...You were saying that I actually did not want to let Tokuchiyo go away? It’s ridiculous that I am attached to the sister who was born from a different woman. You are being so rude!”*

The fan Sagara Yoshihi had held had been shaking, and her hands had been trembling until Tokuchiyo went away. After her figure had faded away, Yoshihi started to talk in a loud voice.

*“Now then. I understand that you are the man who appeared when Amano-Iwato was opened. I also know that you are the messenger Oda Nobuna sent to Otomo Sorin.”*

*Why do you have the same name as mine? Even if it is a coincidence, I don't like it at all.* Sagara Yoshihi felt like vomiting, her body shaking.

*But, because you are a stranger, it's easier to trust you than the Sagara Clan who keeps seeking to betray me.* Yoshihi helplessly laughed.

Yoshiharu sighed when seeing Yoshihi's lonely smile.

*It's just like that. Back then, when the Oda Clan was facing an internal rebellion, Nobuna also wore the same lonely expression when she was about to execute her brother.*

*“You do not seem to have a good relationship with Tokuchiyo-chan. Did something happen in the past?”*

*“You are asking something so bluntly, aren't you? I feel nothing about the circumstances of the Sagara Clan. I have neither my father nor my mother. Both of them are already dead. After my father died, my grandfather who looked after me when I was still young and brought me to succeed the family leadership also died.*

*The people who were backing my uncle attacked me when my grandfather died. They did so to destroy the Sagara Clan, though I have purged them all.*

*When my younger sister was born as an illegitimate child, we drove her out from the clan to become a monk. All because of my grandfather's will.*

*Even though she is a concubine's child, she was born in the same day as mine. It is feared that, someday, it will be the cause of a future revolt in the clan.”*

*“Purge?”*

*“It is so. Even though I am the current head of the clan, no one would complain if I am killed. In fact this is only natural.”*

*“Even if they share the same blood with your family?”*

*“So what? Because they have the same blood as mine, it is only natural that they would kill me to become the next head out of greed? It is so. The connection of blood is troublesome for me. Even though it's our first time meeting each other, don't think that you can understand what I have in my mind!”*

*“.... I’m sorry. Tokuchiyo adores you as an elder sister, and you have the same surname as mine. So I just feel a bit bothered by it.”*

*“So wasn’t it just a coincidence? First of all, I have no intention to search for a husband and bear a child. Increasing the number of my family will bring trouble to the clan. In other words, I won’t have any descendant. Therefore, I have no blood connection with you who came from the future.”*

*That is right. Nobuna also used to be merciless when it came to dealing with her brother’s revolt. Yoshiharu remembered a certain event of the Sengoku Period. If I did not come to this world, Nobuna would have killed Nobukatsu according to the real history.*

Among the clans in the Sengoku era, there were clans whose members were fighting each other to obtain the clan’s power. There were also those who united their families’ power for the sake of the clan. The Oda and Saito Clans belonged to the former while Mori to the latter.

It seemed that the circumstances in the Sagara Clan were more extreme in terms of internal revolt.

However, there was a reason behind the dispute between Nobuna and Nobukatsu. Nobuna’s mother favored Nobukatsu more than the eldest sister. Because it was easier to incite Nobusumi, the rebellion happened many times over.

However, in the Sagara Family, Tokuchiyo respected her elder sister Sagara Yoshihi, so there should be no reason for the sisters to quarrel against each other.

*“Listen, fake Sagara Yoshiharu! There had also been a small internal problem before the four sisters of the Shimazu united. There is a rumor that Otomo Sorin was the mastermind behind the strange incident of father, stepmother, and younger brother being killed at the same time. Because Kyushu is the country of Shura, internal revolts caused by a family member are not uncommon. Do you think that because Tokuchiyo was born in the same day as mine, she could not possibly be a concubine’s child? There is a rumor that she was actually born slightly earlier than me.”*

*“So in reality, Tokuchiyo is the eldest while you are the youngest?”*

*“Hmph. It’s just a rumor that was spread around to push me away. However, the person in question is a simple, uncouth person. In other words, a fool. Because of that, there is no guarantee that no one would take it seriously and try to deceive her.”*

*“But then-”*

*“But then what? I told you not to speak so bluntly; but I have a change of heart. Speak out your mind clearly. Because you are the messenger of the Oda Clan, I’ll make this special treatment for you.”*

Yoshihi disliked people who kept interfering in other people's problems, but Yoshiharu couldn't keep silent and said.

*"Giving birth and bringing a successor; I thought it was the most important thing to do for the present head of a feudal family."*

Huh? Yoshihi expressed the disgust from her heart and frowned. Just for a moment, her elegance collapsed, and her expression reverted to a normal girl like Tokuchiyo.

*"W-W-What the hell are you talking about? You are not my retainer! I don't wanna hear any talk about me finding a husband! I don't want to hear it!"*

*"That is to say, 'to hear like an octopus?'"*

*"Don't say such confusing thing to me!"*

*"Listen to me. Back then, Uesugi Kenshin who fights for justice as the incarnation of Bishamonten declared that she would live as a virgin."*

*"Hmph. So someone like Uesugi Kenshin has withdrawn her eternal vow for a celibate life?"*

*"However, even if you cannot trust your family... even if you do not have a family, you should not abandon your motivation for living."*

Yoshihi's lips trembled at this statement, and her hand was shaking on top of her knees unconsciously.

*"How disrespectful! For me...to find a motivation to survive in this country of Shura. I have yet to find it...but how am I supposed to find it without surviving in this place first. I live and live and keep living, and I should have found it by now, but I haven't. This war torn country in Kyushu is different from the place you lived in the future; the only thing that matters is that you need to keep surviving."*

*"No, that is true. The dead has no dream. Therefore you need to survive first."*

*"Why? You are being awfully frank. Like a vassal who has served me for a long time."*  
Feeling weird, Yoshihi got embarrassed.

*"However, I can no longer see my father and mother anymore. Both of them are still alive in the future, but I cannot see them ever again. Therefore your way of living...it's such a waste. Why did you reject your sister and try to live alone in this world?"*

*"Your family? You refused to get back when Amano-Iwato was opened. Doesn't that mean that you were abandoning them?"*

*"I did not abandon them. In a way, I became independent from the family who had raised me until then. Because I have finally found my reason to live. That is why I don't want to go back to the future."*

Yoshihi unconsciously looked at Yoshiharu's face.

*"...the meaning of life..."*

*Why am I reacting to these words so strongly?*

*"That is called ambition."*

*"...Is there any reason for these ambitions to exist other than just a reason to avoid death and to survive? I kept searching for it yet I have not found it. There is nothing that remains after you die. After you die, everything else like ambition will vanish completely."*

*"No, it will not vanish. My important companion Takenaka Hanbei taught me this: even if I die, my will shall be inherited by my friends and family. So even if I die, my life would not be wasted. The meaning of life and death...what about yours?"*

*"...No, it is just an opinion from someone who was born into a happy family life. It's something that cannot be applied to me. As the 18<sup>th</sup> head of my clan, how much blood do you think that I've shed to keep on living until now?"*

*"Maybe there would a contention between families. But if anything, that is not about the struggle for power. These feelings in the families stem from misunderstanding and lack of understanding. I think that the intervention of the surrounding vassals' ambitions made the fight intense. I have seen it so many times."*

*However, it is possible for you and Tokuchiyo-chan to reach mutual understanding between each other, especially because she is your sister by blood. So you shouldn't judge that girl one-sidedly."*

*"...It's too late. The people who rebel against me will be purged. My sister is not an exception. If the thing you said were true, then it would just hurt me more. For me, there is no 'meaning of life.'"*

*"I'm sorry; I have said too much."*

*"It's alright. I forgive you because you do not belong to our clan. Now let's just eat. There is a hot bear meat stew. Fake Sagara Yoshiharu, is this the first time you've visited Kyushu?"*

*"When I was trained as a pirate by the Murakami Navy, I went to Hakata, Nagasaki, and Ryukyu to buy magnets. But this is the first time I've visited Higo."*

*"Is that so? But why is a messenger like you going to Otomo Sorin by yourself? You should have met Otomo Sorin in Bungo in the east, right?"*

*"I was attacked by the Shikkoku Pirates. It was an accident. It was lucky that I didn't end up with the Shimazu."*

*"Ah, if you got drifted to Shimazu's land and introduced yourself as Sagara Yoshiharu, you'd be beheaded immediately. Anyway, the Sagara and Shimazu Clans shall go to battle against each other soon. Are you going to join the battle?"*

*"I want to stop this war. I'll request the Otomo Clan to attack Mori from behind. So can you declare a truce with Shimazu?"*

*"It's alright. Otomo Sorin will not participate in this battle. It is the Ito Clan that is at war against the Shimazu Clan. When Ito asks for my help, I will send out reinforcements. The place where Shimazu will invade is Hyuga which is adjacent to Higo Province. Shimazu intends to conquer both Hyuga and two of Higo Province. If we cannot hold against Shimazu then the Sagara Clan would be forced to become their vassal. I don't want to serve someone like them. It is better to be a subordinate to the Otomo Clan since they treat us well, and..."*

*"And?"*

*"If we win this battle, the Shimazu wouldn't be able to advance north. Wouldn't that be favorable to the Oda Clan?"*

*"Indeed. But in the history that I know, it is impossible to win against the Shimazu Clan."*

*"Why? Certainly, I did lose to Shimazu in a big battle before. But Shimazu is not invincible. When you lose, it simply means that you lose one battle."*

*"That is because back then, Shimazu still has not gained the technology to mass-produce Tanegashima yet. In the future, Shimazu without a doubt will be an enemy without equal."*

*"Why do you think so? The Ito Clan certainly has grown weaker, but behind our back, isn't Otomo Sorin also preparing her army? Though she does not have the motivation, she is still a powerful daimyo who was able to gain support from the Namban battleships. She even repelled the Mori Clan before."*

*"But the Shimazu have the technology from Namban too. And the thing that the Shimazu has over the Otomo Clan is the unity of the four sisters of Shimazu."*

*"...So which among them will conquer Kyushu? Otomo Sorin has an arrogant personality and favors the Christians which have resulted to discord within her own clan and vassals. Even so, she still emerged victorious against Mori. Even the Shimazu Sisters, there is a difference in personality and age, so they should have not united yet. No, it is precisely that they*

*are sisters that there should be a discord among them. The second sister Shimazu Yoshihiro has better capabilities than the present head, the eldest sister Yoshihisa. Even in Kyushu, she is regarded as the War Maiden. She can't possibly serve her elder sister for too long."*

Yoshihi repeated, *"That is only natural,"* while wearing a lonely smile.

*"Hmph. Even though I'm usually calm, but when it comes to you, Sagara Yoshiharu, I always feel fired up. You are a strange man, Sagara Yoshiharu. You have the same feeling as Tokuchiyo. Perhaps you are my natural enemy."*

*"Shimazu Yoshihisa has the capability as a leader rather than a brave warrior. There is no relation between being the head and being a powerful general. For example, like you who has a frail-looking body unfit to be a general, you still became the head of the clan."*

*"Oh, are you flattering me now? The Sagara Clan does not have a strategist. Why don't you just leave the Oda Clan and serve me instead?"*

*"I would restrain doing so. If I did, Nobuna would send an assassin to Higo."*

*"Hmph. It does sound interesting. For Oda Nobuna to get involved in such a bloody drama. Though I do not care for some country bumpkin, it may be interesting to see such disaster to happen."*

*"So as to say, you do not wish to have your son-in-law be taken away?"*

*"What? My son-in-law? How foolish are you? Listen. There is no way that a beautiful and noble person such as myself could have a monkey like you as my son in law. First of all, I don't have a family to begin with. You should keep yourself in a hut with a bear."*

*"You mean a zoo?"*

*"Listen, Sagara Yoshiharu. If you said that you were my son in law, even if you were the messenger from the Oda Clan, I would immediately kill you. I don't need any family nor do I want someone to come around and declare themselves as my family, okay?"*

Sagara Yoshihi stubbornly rejected that idea.

She already rejected Tokuchiyo. *That must be the reason. If I continue, I might hurt Yoshihi even more. "I understand,"* Yoshiharu bowed.

*"Anyway, can't you propose a truce with Shimazu? It is too dangerous now."*

*"Hmph. You are only saying this for the sake of Oda Nobuna. There is no guarantee that I will lose in this battle!"*

*“Isn’t it because you thought that there was a possibility of losing that you drove Tokuchiyo away?”*

Yoshiharu is racking his head hard, trying to find a way to prevent the war, then suddenly a middle-aged monk entered the hall.

A large man with a height of nearly two meters tall, with shaved head and wearing black Namban sunglasses.

With a visage of a strong man, Yoshiharu subconsciously stared at him.

He must be a war veteran with about 30 years difference in age between him and Yoshihi.

*“Who are you? A chief retainer of the Sagara Clan?”*

*“...”*

*DONG.*

The large monk, still being silent, swung his sword cane in his hand towards Yoshiharu’s head.

If “Dodgeball Yoshiharu” didn’t have his innate super reflexes of evading any strike, the cane would’ve immediately hit his head and made him faint or even die.

*“Woah! That’s dangerous?! What the hell are you doing?”*

*“...”*

Without listening to Yoshiharu’s protest. The dark-glassed monk slowly walked on the floor while still being silent. Yoshiharu kept trying to run away from his second and third attacks.

Yoshiharu dodged a slash that came from the back of his head by rolling horizontally. Later, a heel kick came straight to his jaw.

The man’s foot is right in the front of Yoshiharu. Yoshiharu shouted loudly in his mind, *“An assassin? No, a ninja,”* and put both of his arms crossed.

However, just as before Yoshiharu could try to block this attack, his instinct told him, *“If I take his kick, I will die.”*

Yoshiharu had been trained as a pirate by the Murakami Navy. Ever since he came to this Sengoku era, his physical abilities had improved significantly and thus grew as a different man

from who he had used to be. That was why he was able to react to this attack within the span of his breath.

*I cannot keep running away from this person's rapid attacks. The only way out is to go forward while avoiding his attacks.*

Yoshiharu extended his crossed arm and held the man's heel. He managed to avoid it by changing the kick's trajectory.

ZUUUN.

A sharp blade extending from the shaved black glassed monk's shoes touched the tatami mat and tore it to 2 pieces.

If he receive that attack with his arm, Yoshiharu's hand would have been cut from his arm.

Seeing that, Yoshiharu successfully avoided his attack, then the black-glassed monk spoke for the first time.

*"... How did you know that my shoes had a blade in it? Are you a Koga ninja?"*

*"Ha ha. Well, the only thing I'm good at is avoiding things. I had a feeling that if I receive your kick I would die so I held your feet instead."*

*"... I see. Then die."*

*"Please wait, esteemed uncle! You cannot kill this man!"*

Thanks to Sagara Yoshihi's plea, the man stopped his attacks.

The man calmed his posture, and his killing intent vanished.

*"...Yoshihi. This man is a pretender who uses your name. He is most likely an assassin. We should kill him immediately."*

*"Wrong; he is just a person who happened to have the same name as mine. Furthermore, he is a messenger from the Oda Clan in the capital who came to negotiate with the Otomo Clan."*

*"... It might be a lie too. As long as there is a possibility that he is a spy from the Shimazu Clan, killing him is the best option"*

*"It's not a lie. Back when I saw Amano-Iwato opening, I saw his face."*

*"..."*

The man stretched out his foot, struck Yoshiharu with his toes, and pushed him back. If the man poured more force and killing intent into it, Yoshiharu would have died instantly.

Yoshiharu was saved at last. But after facing continuous attacks like that, he was lucky that he was not yet dead. Yoshiharu, finally realizing that the country of Shura was such an unpredictable place, couldn't stop his trembling body.

*"Urrgh... If I couldn't predict where an attack would come from, I would have been long since dead already."*

*"I'm sorry, Sagara Yoshiharu. This person here is the esteemed uncle Soun. He serves as the prime minister of the neighboring Aso Clan."*

*"Is he a warrior too?"*

*"Yes. The Sagara Clan is an ally to the Aso Clan. Back then, during the time I succeeded the position of the clan's head, esteemed uncle always supported me. He is a good person."*

*"My first impression of him is that he is a brutal and violent man. He possesses a caliber greater than an ordinary warrior."*

*"I'm sorry. It's uncle's habit to kill a man silently if he finds that that person threatens my life."*

*"So that means that he is the one who purged all those who rebelled against you?"*

*"*

*"Yes. Uncle is the one who purged the traitors of the Sagara Clan when they sought for my life."*

*"... If the Sagara Clan perished then the Aso Clan would also be ruined. Since both clans are surrounded by the Otomo, Shimazu and Ryuzoji Clans, we can't survive alone. That is why I'm protecting Yoshihi, that's all."*

Soun sat next to Yoshiharu and whispered to him with a sour look.

*"I'm watching you. If you ever do something strange to Yoshihi, I will kill you."*

Kai Soun released a murderous intent whilst being silent.

*If I become careless, I will die for sure,* Yoshiharu broke out a cold sweat.

*"Both I and Uncle Soun signed an oath of renunciation war at Aso Shrine in Myouken. We decided to cooperate in order to defend ourselves from the other aggressive clans of this Shura country, especially the Shimazu Clan. Before, there was an earnest wish to have a*

*tripartite pacification of Kyushu, but now, all of them are seeking to unify Kyushu by themselves.”*

Kai Soun nodded his head slowly.

*“Exchanging an oath with a little girl, could this person be a lolicon?”*

Yoshiharu thoughtlessly let out such nonsense.

Inside his black sunglasses, Kai Soun’s eyes began to shape like those belonging to a demon, ready to burst out.

*“...Don’t insult me with that future language of yours. I’m not a lolicon. All of this is for the sake of the Higo and Aso Clans.”*

*“I know that you are not a lolicon! So don’t brandish your sword cane like that.”*

*“It’s unusual for uncle to get worked up over jokes. How cute it is to see uncle getting embarrassed.”*

*“...”*

When Yoshihi smiled, Soun lowered his killing intent and pulled his sword cane back silently.

*Ah, their relationship is just like one between a father and daughter. I was wrong to think that he was a lolicon, Yoshiharu understood.*

For Yoshihi who did not trust his family, Kai Soun, despite not being related by blood, was perhaps the only one whom she could consider as a real “family.”

*“... Yoshihi. The Ito Clan is weak. The current head of the clan Ito Yoshisuke indulged himself in Kyoto’s culture and forgot the soul of a Shura. He is just like Imagawa Yoshimoto who was defeated by Oda Nobuna at Okehazama. On the other hand, the four Shimazu sisters mutually complement each other’s abilities, making them a force of Shura among many Shura. Yoshihi, you shouldn’t send any reinforcement to them.”*

Perhaps Soun was opposed to Yoshihi’s sending any troops.

*“...Furthermore, the Aso Clan needs to repel the Ryuzoji Clan’s invasion from the north. Ryuzoji conspired with Shimazu to restrict my movements. Shimazu is a tough enemy to face against with only the Ito Clan and you, Yoshihi.”*

*“Ah ah. But I have already made a promise with the Ito Clan. I cannot break that promise now. The most important thing for a Sengoku warlord to have is faith. This is what Uncle Soun has taught me, right? To keep your oath until death awaits us. Faith is more*

*important than a samurai's way of life. I think that faith is something that we can choose for ourselves and is more trustworthy than a bond of blood."*

*"...It depends on the situation."*

*"Then if the situation changed, would uncle forget the oath you made with me?"*

*"...Such thing will never happen."*

*"Right? So I will keep my promise with the Ito Clan. Although uncle might hate them, our enemy right now is the Shimazu Clan. So please endure it."*

*"...I don't hate the Ito Clan as an enemy. But Yoshihi, the Shimazu Clan has made a key point at Masaki which is adjacent to Satsuma, Higo, and Hyuga. For Shimazu Yoshihiro, it is all for making a bait to ensnare the Ito Clan. Ever since the eldest sister Shimazu Yoshihisa became the clan head, the Shimazu Clan's power has increased rapidly. This is the result of the four sisters' unity. Such unity is something that has never existed in Kyushu before. There is a chance that you will die."*

*Yoshiharu thought, Soun must be wary about the "Four Sisters' Unity" and prompted Yoshihi to defeat Shimazu at any cost. The unity between the sisters is something that is akin to an impossibility to exist in this Shura country of Kyushu.*

*"It's alright. I have a rule to not fight an impossible fight. When it is necessary, I will run away. Although I am inexperienced, I am still a Sengoku daimyo."*

*"...But, stop helping the Ito Clan. You will lose. If you die before leaving a child, there wouldn't be any heir."*

*Uncle, that topic is already over. Yoshihi turned a deaf ear.*

*"The number of troops under Shimazu Yoshihiro's command estimates to 300 against the Ito Clan who has 3000 soldiers plus our Sagara Clan's 500 men. Even if we do not win, we would not lose badly either, Uncle Soun. Besides, I have already prepared a plan to escape."*

*"...Things would have been different if I were to take command. But Shimazu Yoshiharu is famed as a Valkyrie, a monster among Shuras. She positioned herself in a weak position to lure the Ito Clan. Unlike you whom I trained in military tactics, that head of the Ito Clan who indulges himself in his hobbies wouldn't stand a chance against that demon."*

*"It is alright. I am also a princess general."*

*"...Yoshihi. You slowly have become an independent person now."*

*Kai Soun silently watched Yoshihi's bright smile for a while before he finally rose from his seat, muttering, "Do not die, You must live on," and then left the place.*

Yoshiharu suddenly remembered the day when Nobuna quarreled against her foster father Saito Dousan. Saito Dousan loved Nobuna more than his own daughter. The relationship between Kai Soun and Yoshihi were similar to theirs.

Every young princess general must grow into adulthood eventually. But along the process, someone needed to give them paternal love just like what Dousan and Soun did – of course a true father would have been better. Until the day they became independent, someone needed to support them from the back. Yoshiharu thought so.

*I have a mission to support Nobuna until the day she can stand on her own feet. But can I do that? I am not her father and do I have what it takes to be her companion?* [Yes, you are. You are Toyotomi Hideyoshi after all]

But when Soun was about to leave, he said some words to Yoshiharu.

*“...Kid. I am a killer in Higo who has done many inhuman acts for the sake of the Aso Clan. Once, I killed my three sons who secretly communicated with the Ito Clan mercilessly. I may look generous in front of Yoshihi, but should you pose a threat to the Aso Clan, I will kill you without question.”*

*“Such thing to happen, you really killed your sons?”*

*“...It is so. It is necessary to kill any rebel who is against the clan. Even if that person is my son, it is necessary to do everything to protect your master’s life. The way the men of Shuras live is different from the samurais of Honshu. Countless men of Kyushu have gone through countless wars. Don’t forget this, boy; if you do, you will die.”*

*“If the thing you said is true, then you really are a true Shura. But Kai Soun, why do you act very nice in front of Yoshihi?”*

*“...Women and children are different. I only kill male warriors. However, if both the rebels are a man and his child then I will kill them immediately. Without emotion. In silence. With one strike. That is my role in the Aso Clan. For me, the future is all about the continuation of the Aso Clan. I have no interest for a man who came from the future like you, whether it is about what you are planning for or your reason for coming here. But I warn you: do not play around with Yoshihi’s fate.”*

Kai Soun who made Yoshiharu tremble from the bottom of his heart disappeared to the hallway. Even after he left, Yoshiharu still found himself trembling.

Even the Viper of Mino, Saito Dousan, did not kill his own son Yoshitatsu and Ukita Naoie who was notorious for his repeated acts of betrayal, murder, and poisoning, doting on his only daughter Hideie.

However Kai Soun was different.

When Kai Soun appeared to him for the first time, Yoshiharu felt his presence radiated the aura of a genuine “killer.” In front of that bloodlust of a professional killer, Yoshiharu could only feel fear and terror.

*“What kind of person is he? There is neither hostility nor malice in him. Yet to indifferently kill rebels for the sake of his master, even if that person is his son. Does such person exist in Kyushu? This is really a place where you can die at any minute, second.”* [This guy is definitely an imperial agent of the Galactic Empire.]

*“Uncle Soun is not an evil person; it’s just that he holds too much loyalty. To kill his own son who rebelled against the Aso Clan under his master’s order, I feel sorry for him. But even though he is reluctant to kill his own son, he still loves me.”*

*“It is good that he does not kill women and children. If he did, he would be no longer called a human; he would be a true demon.”*

*“It is alright. Uncle won’t do such extreme act.”*

*“That’s right. I’m sorry. He is just like a second father to you, Yoshihi.”*

*“Ah. If uncle did not support me, I would have been dead long ago. The reason why the Sagara Clan is able to survive until now is all thanks to uncle’s support. He is actually a very gentle person. I don’t want you to think that he is a bad person, Yoshiharu.”*

*“I wish that you would give a bit of that kindness to Tokuchiyo-chan as well.”*

*“...Even if it’s not much, she also inherited the same blood of the Sagara Clan within her. But I do not wish to talk about it again. Don’t talk about Tokuchiyo in front me.”*

*The time is near. It’s almost the time to face against Shimazu, Yoshihi stood up.*

*“Do you really wish to go? Please stop! Even Soun does not want you to go.”*

Yoshihi shook her head in disapproval. *The expression that she made, indeed. It was the expression of a princess general who was ready to stake her life and fight, Yoshiharu thought.*

*“I will absolutely fulfill the promises that I made. Because I lost my father, I took up the position as the clan head when I was still a child. Because of the rebellion plotted by my family, I had to stay away from the castle to run away. I was approached by pursuers endlessly and, when the situation had become hopeless, I sought help from the neighboring country. Back then, even though Uncle Soun could take advantage of the confusion and plunder the Sagara Clan for his own good, he chose to help me. When the rebels were subjugated, I was able to return back to Hitoyoshi Castle. For a samurai, trust is the most important thing to have. The relationship between the Aso Clan and Sagara Clan must be supported so that we can bring peace to Higo.*

*And so, together with Uncle Soun, I exchanged an oath of renunciation of war in order to keep supporting each other. Uncle vowed to protect me because I had no family that I could trust. That is why I will never break any promises that I made."*

The province of Higo was divided into two parts; the northern area was ruled by the Aso Clan while the south was governed by the Sagara Clan.

Furthermore, each clan controlled a section of their territory on their own. And it was not uncommon for any of these parts of the province to be invaded by the neighboring countries.

After Sagara Yoshihi reached her coming-of-age, she inherited the position of the head of the Sagara Clan subsequently as her father died. All of this happened when she was still a 10-year old girl.

Moreover, just as Yoshihi attained the position of the clan head, her grandfather who held the real power within the clan who kept supporting her also died.

The Sagara Clan lost two of their supporting pillars.

It was also impossible for the young Sagara Yoshihi who still couldn't handle a spear straight to go to a battle.

Also, Yoshihi's real uncles "The Three Kin of Sagara" also schemed together to assassinate the young princess general.

Because Yoshihi's half sister Tokuchiyo was ordered by her grandfather to become a monk, Tokuchiyo did not have the qualification to become the next head. As such, the rebels did not aim for her life.

The only one that mattered was Yoshihi's life. And so, a rebellion was carried out at one night.

Under the cover of the heavy rain, Sagara Yoshihi managed to escape from Hitoyoshi Castle. Just as she wanted to escape from Higo by using a ship from Yatsushiro, her uncles had already occupied Yatsushiro Harbor.

Tokuchiyo was supposed to be in Yatsushiro Mountain but Yoshihi did not come to her sister. Tokuchiyo was a monk now and did not belong to the Sagara Family anymore. Without neither any troops nor the power as the head of the clan, Yoshihi deliberated in her mind.

*I cannot rely on my sister Tokuchiyo. There is no place left in the Sagara Clan's territory for me to hide in for I have been chased out by my family. That is why, goodbye, sister.*

When Tokuchiyo learnt about the rebellion, Yoshihi had already fled through the mountain range of Northern Higo and had escaped to Mifune Castle in the Aso Clan's territory.

Tokuchiyo shut herself in the temple and lamented her inability to save her elder sister simply due to her not having any military power. But even so, Yoshihi never tried to rely on her sister at all. Because Tokuchiyo did not belong to the Sagara Clan anymore, and, even if she did have any military power, Yoshihi would never go to ask for her sister's help.

At the stormy sky on midnight,

Yoshihi cried, standing in front of Mifune Castle.

She never drank nor ate anything ever since she came there. She did not even have any chance to rest. Because behind her, the pursuers were approaching to "kill Yoshihi before she could take refuge in the Aso Clan's territory" led by three people on horseback.

This was the Shura country of Kyushu. There wasn't any law that exempted princesses from being killed. If Yoshihi were to be caught by the three pursuers, her life would be forfeited without question.

However, no matter how hard she knocked the door, it did not open.

If there was a family discord happening, the Sagara Clan's power would weaken without doubt. If the Sagara Clan were divided by a rebellion, then it would be advantageous for the Aso Clan. If they could annex the Sagara Clan, they could pacify all parts of Higo.

Of course the head of the Aso Clan would rather prefer that Yoshihi be killed. There was no benefit for the Aso Clan in helping a young and helpless princess general. Such was the law of the samurai in this Sengoku era, or rather in this country of Shura. Even the young and clever Yoshihi understood that fact. However, with her hand covered with blood, she desperately kept hitting the door hard.

Even when the fierce storm was battering her, she still continued to shout.

*"...Help...Help me... I want to live...I do not want to die yet!"*

At that time

From the other side of the gate, the voice of a cold man which was not filled with any emotion entered her ears.

*"...Sagara Yoshihi. Do you wish to live? Your father and grandfather had already died. Your half-sister is banished to a temple. Your three uncles are seeking to kill you. In this world of Shura, do you have any hope of survival? Where is your hope?"*

It was the voice of the lord of Mifune Castle, Kai Soun.

When the Sagara Clan was allied to the Aso Clan, she met him several times.

He was an unrivaled, undefeated brave general who supported the Aso Clan until now. He also held the reputation of an assassin who would kill any rebel without mercy. [the Jedi is no more]

A tall man with the appearance of a monk, wearing black Namban sunglasses.

He gave out the impression of an extraordinary and terrifying man, whose hands were covered with the blood of countless men in battlefield.

Even so, there was no other person whom she could call out for help.

*“Please help me. Even though I am still a kid and does not have anything to return your favor, please help me...”*

*“... I am the man who killed my three sons who had secretly plotted with the Ito Clan under the order of the clan head. I have no regret even if tears were to be shed. This is simply my job. Do you think that I will save the current head of the Sagara Clan who is pursued by her own clan? Even my lord would think that it is better to leave you to die in order for a chance to annex the Sagara Clan present itself.”*

Even though Yoshihi was desperately begging for her life, Soun did not change his cold-hearted reply.

Looking back, the three men were closing in.

Yoshihi was prepared for death to embrace her.

But in the end, she simply wished for someone to hear her last desire.

Therefore, in front of death with her mind completely free of hesitation, she shouted,

*“I am still young and even though I want to do anything, I still have done nothing. I do not want to die young because I have yet to find my dream. At least allow me to find my purpose in life before dying!”*

At this moment,

Miracle happened in front of Yoshihi.

The door of Mifune Castle which had been closed tight opened.

A monk with a large build riding a black-tinged horse was standing tall in the middle of the storm while holding his spear tightly.

There stood a person with an expressionless face wearing a pair of black Namban sunglasses.

With a visage that no one would ever forget, full of murderous intent and bloodlust.

That person was Kai Soun.

*"Ah ah."*

Yoshihi understood from her heart that this person would protect her. If someone looked closely, Soun were staring at the crying Yoshihi.

*"...If you wish to find a reason to live, then keep living. Take up the spear and get on behind. A person who can survive is a person who is willing to fight for his life. I will only lend you a hand."*

At this night, Yoshihi noticed that this cold-hearted invincible Shura looked like a tragic hero. In the country of Shura where betrayals occurred endlessly, he had killed countless men and even his own child for the sake of his master. The soul that had been repeatedly wounded and the pain that had been inflicted were kept in solitude and made him a tragic hero.

Soun grabbed Yoshihi's hand and brought her to his horse.

The three men shouted, *"It's useless even if you receive help. We will kill you, Sagara Yoshihi,"* "If anyone gets in our way, we will kill them as well!" Behind them, there are 300 men.

*"Kai Soun! You who killed his own son wish to save a girl who is not even related by blood? Someone like you can never escape from the sin of killing your own child!"*

*"Give us Yoshihi's neck!"*

*"You do not have the right to meddle with our clan's problem without your master's permission!"*

Kai Soun rode his black horse without saying anything.

The three men rushed in as Soun brandished his spears.

The men shouted, *"What can a single person do against three people,"* and took a step back while preparing their bows and arrows.

The tip of Soun's spear which was spun into many directions protracted. It lengthened into incredible lengths.

There was a chain hidden within the spear. The chain was manipulated by Soun's subtle finger movements. It undulated in the air like a snake.

*"You train yourself in using this kind of spear?"*

*"You bastard, are you trying to use this heretic weapon?!"*

*"A true samurai will never use such a foul technique!"*

As if it were a creature with its own will, it dodged every arrow and knife that was thrown at it.

The three men continuously insulted Soun for using such a disgraceful weapon that ignored the wars of samurai. But before they could finish insulting him, the men's heads had flown to the air after being severed from their bodies.

Even with blood gushing out like a waterfall, Kai Soun's face remained expressionless.

Because of the black Namban glasses protecting his vision from being obstructed by the splash of blood.

*"...What I value the most is trust. If there is any disloyal vassal that rebels against their master, they must be killed. Such is my job."*

The three men were killed in one swing. The soldiers of the rebel army quickly retreated in confusion.

But Kai Soun gave chase, killing them one by one.

*"...Sagara Yoshihi. You must wield your spear. Kill the remaining ninety-seven soldiers."*

*"Wait. They are only men ordered by my uncle. Most of them are also my family. Please stop,"* Yoshihi begged for Soun to stop.

*"Futile. I decided to protect because of the faith that I held. I cannot allow anyone to rebel against their master, and I will never break that faith. Even if it's my family. Even if it is my own son. It is precisely that, in this Shura country, fights between families are happening that I will stick to my faith until the end. That is the meaning of my life. If I break that faith, everyone whom I have murdered would die for nothing. That is the thing that I cannot allow."*

*"No! This life that you have saved will never go to waste! So please stop killing everyone!"*

*"No. Seeds of trouble need to be cut before it grows. You must kill every person who is involved in the rebellion. Even your younger sister Tokuchiyo will turn into a traitor someday. I will kill her."*

*"...No, you cannot kill Tokuchiyo! Because that girl is no longer related to the Sagara Clan. She is a total stranger now. She will never come back nor will she become a samurai. If you insist on killing Tokuchiyo, then you must kill me first!"*

Yoshihi pulled out the short sword behind Soun's back.

At that moment, Soun stopped moving.

At that moment, the storm that had fallen so heavy stopped.

Soun's lips loosened in front of Yoshihi who was clinging on his back.

*"...Too naïve. But back then when you were ready to seriously take my life, you had good eyes. When I killed my sons, they too revealed courage just like yours."*

*"... Ah... I... I'm sorry..."*

*"Sagara Yoshihi, to survive in this Shura country is to find the meaning of your life. If it's you then you will find it."*

*"Yes, I will find it, Uncle Soun."*

Soun did not try to take advantage of the rebellion to snatch the Sagara Clan's power.

*"The Aso Clan is an ally to the Sagara Clan. To take advantage of this problem will contradict with my beliefs,"* and by declaring so, he helped Yoshihi reclaim her position.

A vow was exchanged between Soun and the young Yoshihi. Held within Aso Shrine located at Myouken, the two of them exchanged an oath of renunciation of wars to each other.

As a result, the vassals and the family members who had plotted the rebellion against Yoshihi were wiped out. It was said that Yoshihi knew that if someone were to violate the oath, Soun would kill them immediately.

And so, Yoshihi returned as the clan head to Hitoyoshi Castle while guarded by Soun. Moreover, he also continued to purge all those who were related to the rebellion. Yoshihi herself tried to save the vassals who were targeted by Soun as much as possible. In all of Higo Province, only Yoshihi was not afraid of Kai Soun. People found it hard to believe.

However, after this debacle was over, Tokuchiyo who had withdrawn herself from priesthood to become a princess general without permission was prohibited by Yoshihi to enter Hitoyoshi Castle. The retainers did not know that the reason why Yoshihi did such thing was to prevent Tokuchiyo from being killed by Soun, not because she feared the possibility of her instigating a revolt in the future. However, because she was once betrayed by her family, Yoshihi did not let anyone to realize this.

However, even Yoshihi did not kill Tokuchiyo. It was well-known within the clan that Tokuchiyo sincerely adored her elder sister Yoshihi, and they loved and called the self-proclaimed princess general as the "monkey of Mt. Yatsushiro." Yoshihi slowly began to grow as a noble daimyo both physically and mentally. Following this, most of the Sagara Clan retainers eventually pledged their loyalty to her.

*"So, you have decided not to break any promises ever?"*

*“Indeed. Absolutely. Promises that are made must not be broken. Back then, if Uncle Soun broke our promises, I would have been dead. I decided to keep my promises since I was still young.”*

*“But, did you try to protect Tokuchiyio from Soun? Perhaps you really are a good elder sister to your younger sister. But why didn’t you tell her this?”*

*“Because it was a secret between me and uncle. Don’t tell Tokuchiyo. I do not wish to be misunderstood. Afterall, she is no longer a part of the Sagara Clan so just leave it at that.”*

*Yoshihi did not trust her family and insisted that she do not any, but Yoshiharu noticed that there must be a reason why she rejected Tokuchiyo. But I should not implore further about it. Yoshihi must have a lot in her mind. I should just wait for the time when she reveals it herself.*

*“...I have never talked about this with anyone before. Yet I talked about it with you even though it is the first time we’ve met each other. You really are a strange person.”* [Wincest yay! Maybe?]

*“Then why did you talk to me about it?”*

*“It was all because you said about the ‘meaning of life’ to me. I have a feeling that your circumstances are similar to mine. Although I hold faith within me, it will all vanish when I die.”*

*I see, then I shall participate in this battle as the strategist in place of Soun. “Please send me to Otomo Sorin after this,” Yoshiharu nodded.*

*“Are you? Do you really want to head out to Otomo Sorin that quickly?”*

*“I cannot neglect the debt of providing me a meal and place to stay with you. Although I am not a good strategist, but compared to Soun, my knowledge can definitely help you. If Shimazu beats the Ito Clan and claims Hyuga Province, their border would directly face the Otomo Clan’s territory. If the Shimazu and Otomo Clans ever get caught in a battle, the Oda Clan would be in danger.”*

*“But didn’t you lead the Murakami Navy in Kizugawaguchi and defeat Oda Nobuna? Knowledge from the future is surprisingly fickle. Say, is it okay if I put all the blame to you if we lose this battle? Hahahaha.”* [Editor’s note: As you can see, I’m not good with laughter.]

*“No, the future is never set in stone. Also Nobuna is an extraordinary person too.”*

*“Muu. You speak fondly of her, don’t you?”*

*“N-No such thing!”*

*“When I saw Oda Nobuna back when Amano-Iwato was opened, I certainly thought that she was beautiful. But my personality and noble looks are much better than Oda Nobuna.”*

*“I think Nobuna is still better. But why are you comparing yourself to her?”*

*“This is a matter of self-esteem for us princess generals. You must admit that I am much nobler than Oda Nobuna.”*

*“Let’s talk about this matter later. The problem is the Shimazu Clan. Shimazu’s power is extraordinary. Shimazu will win against the Ito Clan and claim Hyuga Province. Though I do not know what will happen in this war, a single misjudgment will lead to our defeat.”*

*“Oh, although you said such unreliable words, you showed me a face of a good warrior. You must not die in this battle, Sagara Yoshiharu. Make sure that you will survive.”*

It was a gentle smile. Yoshiharu thought that Kai Soun who lived in this country of Shura and had committed infanticide filicide decided to protect Yoshihi for her smile. It was not simply for the sake of the Aso Clan but also to make sure that Yoshihi survived.

Even if it was for the sake of his master’s clan, no man would still remain the same after killing his own son after another person. While they were counted among the Three Great Evils of Sengoku period who had committed many wicked deeds, both Dousan and Hisahide loved Nobuna with compassion just like a Bodhisattva. Kai Soun probably saved the last remaining humanity he had by protecting Yoshihi. Perhaps, back then when Yoshihi declared that she would protect her sister, he regained a bit of his humanity from looking at her innocent eyes.

*Indeed...Dousan and Hisahide acted as her stepfather and stepmother, and in order to protect Nobuna, they died for her. This is the same for Usami Sadamitsu who protected Uesugi Kenshin. Yamamoto Kansuke with Takeda Shingen. Kobayakawa and her elder brother Mori Takamoto. All of these men of Sengoku era died for the sake of protecting the princess generals who fought in the battlefield. In the history I know, it is the men who fight in the battlefield, but this world is different and much harsher.*

*I wonder if Nobuna who is fighting Kenshin is still safe. Meanwhile, as I was drifted to Higo, has the defense in Tamba where Juubei is isolated been broken through yet? Thinking of all of these, Yoshiharu felt restless.*

And yet, at the same time, Yoshihi was living in solitude in this merciless country of Shura. She too couldn’t be abandoned thoughtlessly.

*“If Yoshihi believed that Kai Soun were not an evil person, then I too shall believe in him.”*

Seeing Yoshiharu’s face which involuntarily showed that he had decided to protect her, Yoshihi laughed like a mischievous child.

*“Your lord is currently in Honshuu, right, Yoshiharu? Have you made a child with your lover already?”*

*“Eh? N-no, such thing is impossible.”*

*“Oh? Is that so? But it looks like you already did it with her.”*

*Well, I am thinking about making a child already,* Yoshiharu scratched his head.

*“I’m not in a position where I can marry her, and the Oda Clan is currently surrounded by many enemies in all sides so it’s impossible.”*

*“Hee, so you still are not regarded as Oda Nobuna’s official husband? That is surprising. Perhaps from her viewpoint, you are a late bloomer as a male lover. Maybe Oda Nobuna was disgusted by you?”*

Hearing those words, Yoshiharu’s shoulders dropped in dejection.

*“...Maybe...So as to say...I am...Useless as a man...”*

*“You are too pitiful. You should do some training to gain experience. Shall I help you with that? But of course, I am still a virgin.”*

*“W-W-What the hell are you saying?! I cannot do such an absurd thing! If I lay a hand on you, Kai Soun will put his sword on my head!”*

*“It’s a joke, you idiot. Why would I who holds antipathy against my family make a child? And you are not a human but a monkey, hahaha!”*

*“Although my stress is gone now, I beg you not to make that kind of joke again. It is bad for my heart.”*

*However, because we can’t lose this battle, a defeat like that time in Kizugawaguchi must not be allowed.*

*“The problem right now is the quality and morale of the Ito Clan’s army. Just because their army is 10 times larger than the enemy’s, they underestimated the Shimazu Clan.”*

*“Yoshiharu, here at Hitoyoshi Castle gathered 500 Sagara Clan’s soldiers. They are all soldiers who match the strength of a thousand men. Across our mountain stands a place named Masaki Temple; Masaki is a key point which is adjacent to the Provinces of Higo, Satsuma and Hyuga. We’ll definitely drive Shimazu Yoshihiro out of Masaki.”* [I took my luxury of searching stuffs from the game Nobunaga’s Ambition as the reference]

The location where the battle would take was in Masaki Temple located near the border of Higo and Hyuga Provinces. It was close to Hitoyoshi Castle.

Whilst crossing the road along the mountain, Yoshihi taught several things to Yoshiharu.

The Four Sisters of Shimazu.

The head of the clan was the eldest sister, Shimazu Yoshihisa, who had the capability of a great leader.

The second daughter of Shimazu Family, Shimazu Yoshihiro, was the strongest general who was nicknamed “Valkyrie.” She was currently in Masaki in order to fight the Ito Clan in the front.

The third daughter who was in charge in schemes and plots was the resourceful general Shimazu Toshihisa.

And finally, the fourth daughter who was the genius in military arts and tactics, The “Heaven-Sent Child” Shimazu Iehisa.

Previously, Yoshihi suffered a crushing defeat at Satsuma’s territory because of Iehisa.

Yoshiharu had been an acquaintance with the last daughter Iehisa before.

*“I have met Iehisa previously. She came to Kyoto for sightseeing and was welcomed by Juubei-chan and me before.”*

*“Indeed. You know a lot of people don’t you? Did you use that shameless face of you to seduce Iehisa?”*

*“I did not! She is still a young child! Although she does have an impression of being the youngest child.”*

Thanks to Nobuna’s reconstruction of the capital, tourists rapidly came to Kyoto. When high-ranking officials came for sightseeing, the retainers from the Oda Clan would be entrusted with the task of welcoming these people for the sake of diplomacy. In the capital, there was a chance to deepen relationships with various daimyo within the country. This was the advantage of someone who had the capital under their control. When Iehisa came to Kyoto, both Mitsuhide and Yoshiharu were free, so they were entrusted with the task of welcoming her.

When Shimazu Iehisa came, she took off her Satsuma dialect and turned into a simple and innocent young girl. She was a girl who wanted to fall in love with someone and came to Kyoto because she was attracted by the “Tale of Genji.” However, if a “bad influence” were to be shown, then a fight would soon erupt with many military men fighting each other including the Shimazu’s ogre.

Yoshiharu recalled Iehisa’s smile back then in Kyoto, “*Must I fight the Shimazu,*” and thought of the severity of this Sengoku period.

*“Although Iehisa looks like a sweet girl, you must be careful since that girl is also a Shura. Even I have suffered defeat in her hands. However, the enemy that we are facing now is Shimazu Yoshihiro. She is feared as a ferocious ogre in the battlefield. The people of Satsuma*

*respect her as a brave general and are even going as far as to revere her as the 'God of Military Arts' [Takegami]. However, we still hold the advantage in terms of troop quantity."*

*"No, according to the history I know, there is a record showing that Shimazu Yoshihiro led 7,000 men to victory against an enemy of 20,000 soldiers, though I think that it's a bit exaggerated. It is also said that she has won against enemies with armies 30 times her own. Her strength seemed to lack any common sense for sure."*

*"How could that be? To repel 20,000 soldiers with only 7,000 men. Even if she is regarded as a "Valkyrie," there should be a limit for exaggerated stories like that. Perhaps that is just a made-up story."*

At the same time that they passed Masaki Temple, *"I am a soldier in charge of scouting sent by Lord Kai Soun,"* a person suddenly appeared and prostrated in front of Yoshihi and Yoshiharu.

*"A ninja sent by Soun?"*

The threat of the Shimazu Clan was not that big compared to the relationship between the Ito and Aso Clans. Back then, Soun killed his three sons who secretly communicated with the Ito Clan. But due to an invasion by the Ryuzoji Clan from the north, the Aso Clan sent out help to the Ito Clan. Even so, Lord Soun sent scouts because he was worried of the Sagara Clan.

*"Uncle did?"*

*"Yes. Shimazu Yoshihiro has set herself along with her 300 men in Lino Castle at Masaki. They are probably planning to lure out both the Ito and Sagara Clans' armies there. We are also expecting an ambush from Shimazu at Mt. Suwa. There are countless banners hanging out in there. All of them bear the insignia of a cross inside a circle."*

The ninja withdrew himself.

The sunset came and the surroundings was dark. Thankfully, the ambush hidden in Mt. Suwa was seen through by the ninja's eyesight.

*"The total number of troops under the Ito Clan is 3,000. The Ito Clan has successfully mustered a main force which is ten times of the Shimazu Army. However, the supreme commander Ito Sukeyasu did not attack Shimazu Yoshihiro who had confined herself in Lino Castle and instead surrounded the Kakuto Castle, which is a dangerous move."*

*"What? You will win this if you take Lino Castle from Oshiro, but Kakuto Castle is the bait for the Ito Clan placed by Shimazu Yoshihiro."*

*"Right."*

The ninja disappeared again

Yoshihi put absolute trust in Kai Soun. In addition, the Shimazu had never launched a full scale invasion to Higo before. It was all because they were wary against the Aso Clan's prime minister, Kai Soun.

As long as Kai Soun was alive, not even the most progressive combat-oriented Shimazu Clan could conquer the Higo Provinces. Other clans in Kyushu were also afraid of facing Kai Soun.

*"Ito Sukeyasu is still a greenhorn. Against Uncle Soun and Shimazu Yoshihiro, his military is indeed not even worth of comparison."*

*To comply to the Ito Clan's request to break the ambush in Masaki.*

*Or to listen to Soun's advice and retreat?* Yoshihi was shaken.

*"Yoshiharu. How do you see this situation? You know the future right?"*

Yoshihi was currently at a critical crosspoint.

Yoshiharu's knowledge about the Sengoku period was mostly about the regions of Chugoku to the central Honshuu, Japan. From Oda, Saito, Matsudaira, Asai-Asakura, Hisahide Matsunaga, Takeda and Uesugi to Mori and Saika-Ikki – although not all of the most important battles had happened yet, he at least knew most of it.

Shikoku, Kyushu and northern part of Oshuu were outside his range.

However Kyushu was a considerably famous province during the Sengoku period. Therefore Yoshiharu had some knowledge about the important battles and events in Kyushu.

*Yeah. The next battle is the famous battle that became the starting point of Shimazu's ambition of conquering Kyushu. Isn't it the so-called "Okehazama of Kyushu?"*

When Yoshiharu remembered this fact, his body trembled from nervousness.

*"Yoshihi. I cannot directly see the future but is there any field called Kizaki Plain beside Masaki Temple?"*

*"Yes there is. But the people from Honshuu call it as "Kizakihara."*

The knowledge about the Sengoku period from the future flowed into Yoshiharu's mind, and he recalled about the Battle of Okehazama immediately. Yoshiharu remembered the history. Back then, Imagawa Yoshimoto took a rest at Okehazama. There, he was able to gain the most important information needed for Nobuna's surprise attack.

But this battle, the Battle of Kizakihara, was a losing battle. Shimazu exterminated the Ito Clan's army that numbered ten times of their own. The Sagara Clan did not participate in the battle. They were deceived by Shimazu's fake troops and withdrew.

*"It is so Yoshihi. The troops at Mt. Suwa are fake. There is no ambush there. Shimazu put their ambush at a different location. To exterminate their enemy's 3,000-men army, they only need 300 men, and it is not possible for the Sagara Clan to send any troops. They don't have enough military power."*

*"Aren't you making a mistake? Didn't uncle send the ninja to observe the camped place and look for an ambush?"*

*"That was Shimazu's ninja. They replaced the real ones to report the status of an ambush. Because they used Soun's name, you got shaken and unconditionally believed in their words. You do not trust other people easily but give some exceptions to people whom you approve of. The Shimazu Clan does not only have a brave warrior but also a tactician."*

*"...How despicable. The one who can come up with this sinister tactic is certainly the third sister, Shimazu Toshihisa. I have decided our destination, Yoshiharu. I will go forward to the battlefield. I cannot turn back and leave Shimazu after they used uncle's name."*

*"Wait a second, Yoshihi. Shimazu is wary of Soun. Even if the Ito Clan gets defeated, they will not invade Higo immediately."*

*"If I turn back here, Ito will be defeated, right? Is that the future that you know?"*

*"Yes. Ito will lose this battle. Their clan will perish and Hyuga will fall to Shimazu's hands."*

*"Ito deceived uncle's son and brought tragedy to his family. I do not sympathize with them even if they perish. But a promise is still a promise. That's why."*

Yoshihi flew to rage when she learned that they used Soun's important name to deceive her and so resolved to fight the Shimazu Clan tonight.

*"Yoshiharu. If you know more about Shimazu's next strategy, then tell me. I was directly taught by Uncle Soun about military knowledge. If I can read what Shimazu's next move is then I could win."*

*"It's Tsuru no Buse [Hidden Fishing Field]. The Shimazu will purposefully show that they are overwhelmed by the Ito Clan's army in numerical superiority, while, actually, the Shimazu will have already prepared some sacrifices as they retreat to Kizakihara and show the real "defeat." Naturally, Ito shall take the momentum to attack and pursue the retreating Shimazu Army. At that time, they will be ambushed from behind, and the main army that has retreated will turn in reverse and start attacking the Ito Clan's army simultaneously. Since the enemy is attacked at*

*both sides on top of a plain, they will have no way to retreat. Even so, the enemy is numbered 10 times of their own. But the Shimazu is willing to sacrifice a lot of men and officers in order to achieve victory. This Shimazu's honorable suicide tactic shall bring more victories to them in the future."*

*"I have never heard about such crazy tactic like this even in this country of Shura, Kyushu!" Yoshihi was screamed while trembling.*

*"If there is a slight mistake, won't the whole army suffer an honorable death?"*

*"It is so. This crazy tactic can be completed simply because it was used in this Shura country. Perhaps in this battle, the Tsuru no Buse will be accomplished."*

*"Shimazu will not invade Higo immediately after you return. Instead they will leave Hyuga and attack Otomo Sorin," Yoshiharu repeated.*

*"Yoshihi. If you want to compete with Shimazu, you have to devise a countermeasure against Tsuru no Buse."*

*"No, Yoshiharu. You have already seen through Tsuru no Buse. Simply put, they need to place a separate army outside the premise of the battlefield where the ambush shall take place. Won't I be able to send out the troop to repel them?"*

*"It certainly seems so."*

*"The 500 troops shall move across Mt. Suwa and attack the Shimazu Army that has gathered at Kizakihara. There will be 3,000 men in Ito's armies with 500 Sagara troops. I will pincer the Shimazu in reverse! The enemy only numbers 300. It is highly unlikely even for a demon god to break through this numerical inferiority."*

It couldn't be stopped anymore. Yoshihi needed to win no matter what.

Yoshiharu, *It's strange. No matter what, I feel like we still can't win for some reason,* was hit by a strange anxiety and rode his horse alongside Yoshihi.

The situation of war had changed.

When the Ito Clan proceeded to attack the vulnerable Kakuto Castle, Shimazu Yoshihiro led her troop to move behind them. Dawn came, the Ito Clan abandoned the idea of conquering Kakuto Castle and proceeded to retreat from Shimazu's sudden attack by crossing through and build firm defenses at Mt. Shiratori.

However, Shimazu's fake troops at Mt.Suwa had already predicted their movement beforehand and waited for their arrival. The Ito forces believed that these fake troops as an

ambush, threw away the choice to jump into a trap, fought with reduced visibility at Shiratoriyama, and chose an open battle in Kizakihara.

That was because they could use their superior number of troops more effectively in an open field battle. However, due to their rushed movement, they were on the verge of exhaustion as they faced against Shimazu's armies.

Sagara's armies should have installed more difference in their military power.

Moreover, with their armies numbering 10 times more than Shimazu's armies, the latter started to retreat from Kizakihara. The young nobleman, Ito Sukeyasu, was convinced of their victory and began to give chase to the retreating Shimazu's armies.

At the same time the battle entered its decisive moment at Kizakihara, the report, *"The Sagara Armies have passed through Mt.Suwa and proceed to go straight to Kizakihara,"* came to Ito Sukeyasu.

The outcome of this battle should be decided depending on whether Hitoyoshi's armies could come on time. Even though Ito Sukeyasu was a young nobleman, but since he was born in the country of Shura, his blood began to boil in excitement.

Once he found his chance of victory, he grasped his spear after he had gotten over his confusion.

*"Win. We can win this. Our long battle with the Shimazu Clan shall end at last! Head out for Shimazu's number one general, Shimazu Yoshihiro! Go and take Shimazu Yoshihisa's right hand man. Shimazu is not worth being feared once Shimazu Yoshihiro gets taken down."*

However, as the supreme commander's boiling blood of Shura reached out to Yoshihi and Yoshiharu, an unexpected result contrary to their belief came to them.

This time, Shimazu Yoshihiro who led the retreating troops from the Ito Clan's armies suddenly took a turn and went straight to Ito's armies.

All of the men under Shimazu's banner, who had clashed against the armies with 10 times the amount of their own with their body soaked with their enemies' blood and had suffered many injuries, were gasping for breath.

Half of their soldiers had been killed and fallen. However their hearts did not waver and their morale was still high. It was all done just to lure the enemies out to Kizakihara.

Everyone in Shimazu's armies including the second daughter, Shimazu Yoshihiro, was willing to discard their own life in order to bring victory to their clan. There was no other troops left that could be used to help them anymore. Shimazu Yoshihiro personally appeared in front of the Shimazu Clan's armies.

Almond eyes [slit or Tsurime eyes]. White skin.

Long, glossy, straight hair.

The second sister, Shimazu Yoshihiro, of the Shimazu's Four Sisters.

In respect to her late grandfather Shimazu Jisshinsai, she declared thus:

*"All of you people. The distinguished noble Ito Sukeyasu. Furthermore, Sagara Yoshihi who has seen through our trap. Because the Shimazu clan cannot win in this situation, I've personally appeared in the front."*

*"Please don't, Hime-sama."*

*"I will not be easily killed just like that, for I am Shimazu Yoshihiro."*

The 3<sup>rd</sup> sister Shimazu Toshihisa and 4<sup>th</sup> sister Shimazu Iehisa. These extraordinary strategist and tactician worked together to complete this plan. The tactic of using a small unit of troops to perform an honorable death to eliminate armies with 10 times of their own troops known as the "Tsuru no Buze" should have been successful.

However, Sagara Yoshihi had found out about the fake troops at Mt. Suwa and proceeded to rush to Kizakihara.

A flag bearing the symbol of a long sword and umebachi [Japanese apricot flower], the armies under the Sagara Clan finally came into Yoshihiro's sight.

At the time that the ambush would take place, Shimazu would turn around in order to surround the Ito Clan to complete Tsuru no Buse. But at the same time, Sagara's armies rushed in and attacked Shimazu's flank at Kizakihara.

*Toshihisa even asked for the help of the Ryuzoji Clan at Hizen so that the Aso couldn't move. Kai Soun can't enter the war. The only one who can see through Toshihisa's schemes to delay Kai Soun is Nabeshima of Ryuzoji Iekane. Something must have happened. Some mysterious thing that we have not expected. But this is a battle. One must expect a battle when they advance to the country of Shura. In a case where we fall unto an unpredictable situation, I told the soldier to be prepared to discard their life and find their determination in their death.*

Yoshihiro let out a fearless smile as her sharp eyes were filled with fighting spirit. Even at the face of death, she would not let her breath go into disorder. Shura's touki [fighting spirit] that couldn't be concealed from her body flowed out.

Everyone in Shimazu Army believed that this beautiful Shura and princess general Yoshihiro was a genuine Valkyrie.

As long as they could protect Yoshihiro, they would gladly sacrifice their lives and die with satisfaction. Such was the determination of the samurai of Satsuma.

They did not worship her as just an idol. Yoshihiro lived in the unpleasant milieu with the soldiers and even ate from the same bowl of rice. She shed tears for those who were wounded, and so the soldiers came to love this princess general who was overflowing with compassion as a human being.

Shimazu Yoshihiro did not treat a soldier as a disposable piece even if she put them in front of death to find the resolution of dying an honorable death. The soldiers were respected and loved as the people of Satsuma by the Shimazu Clan. They fought together, spent joy together, and wept together. That was why they could die with satisfaction for Yoshihiro's sake.

*"Once Hyuga is captured, the three states of Satsuma, Osumi and Hyuga that once belonged to the Shimazu Clan shall be united again. This is the long-cherished wish of my grandfather Jisshinsai and my father Takahisa. That wish shall be fulfilled tonight. Everyone, be ready to throw away your life. Every man takes on ten men. The men of Satsuma Hayato have always protected Japan from foreign forces. The soldiers that serve Shimazu are all Shura who match thousands of men. Give your life to me and to the others!"*

*I shall meet my death here! All for death!* Yoshihiro sternly screamed. "Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh," all of Shimazu's soldiers let out a mad war cry like crazy apes on the battlefield. Shimazu's ambush soldiers proceeded to attack Ito's armies from behind.

At the same time, a vanguard of the Sagara's armies collided and swallowed Shimazu's main armies. Yoshihiro divided the 300 soldiers in half and left the middle for an ambush. At the same time, the total number of the soldiers who survived in Yoshihiro's hands was already less than 100 people.

There were 3000 soldiers of the Ito Clan's army in the front and 500 soldiers of the Sagara Clan's army from their side. This Sagara Army who should have been deceived by the false military information and fled back to Hitoyoshi Castle came as an unexpected enemy.

*"Sagara Yoshihi! How unexpected! You were able to give out a reasonable military order and also inspired your soldier as well"*

To put things in logical thinking, Shimazu Yoshihiro and her remaining 100 troops should have perished in an instant. Yet the elite 100 men remained to resist stubbornly, and then Yoshihiro grasped a spear and dove towards the overwhelming amount of enemy soldiers.

*Sagara Yoshihi, even if you just came here, I will not let the Shimazu's troops to compete in the number of troops anymore.* [She meant that she would fight the general instead of troop confrontation]

At this time, the supreme commander Ito Sukeyasu came out in the front of his army with full vigor. Yoshihiro finally found a chance to reverse the situation.

*“Shimazu Yoshihiro, I am the supreme commander of this army! This battle has resulted in our victory! If you do not retreat then I will take your neck!”*

*“Hmph. To grab your spear only after being intoxicated by victory. You are still too young.”*

*“How rude. You are obviously in the same age as I am, Shimazu Yoshihiro.”*

Shimazu Yoshihiro was a maiden who had never fallen in love before; but she had witnessed many deaths on the battlefield, and the death of many retainers with her own eyes since the age of seven.

Yoshihiro herself was not afraid even if death approached her.

All men would simply turn to ashes once they die. She rationally thought so.

However, even if they were on the same age, Ito Sukeyasu had less war experience compared to Yoshihiro. *“I have won against the Valkyrie Shimazu Yoshihiro! I am the strongest Shura of Kyushu,”* he roared loudly in mad excitement.

No. It could be said that Ito Sukeyasu was rather normal; it’s just that Shimazu Yoshihiro was an abnormal princess general.

*“A son of a noble family cannot be a match against ‘Takegami.’”*

*“We shall help Master Sukeyasu.”*

In order to protect Ito Sukeyasu who was blinded by his overexcitement, famous generals of the Ito Clan rushed over. They combined with Ito Sukeyasu and surrounded Yoshihiro.

The second in command, Ito Sukenobu.

The best master spearman in Kyushu, Yuukisaki Masaie.

*“3 to 1? That’s perfect.”*

At this time, due to the Sagara Clan’s armies who had penetrated towards the center of the Shimazu Clan’s armies – the latter finally falling to confusion – there was no spare troop that Shimazu’s army could send to aid Yoshihiro. Sagara Yoshihi who commanded the army alongside Yoshiharu shouted, *“It is the victory of the combined forces of the Ito and Sagara Clans.”*

*“Shimazu Yoshihiro. It does not matter whether you are a princess general or a warlord in the country of Shura. Your head is ours.”*

Yuukisaki Masaie let out an arrow aimed towards Yoshihiro’s neck while blocking her escape route. Ito Sukenobu brandished his spear and thrust it towards her chest.

*“Hisatsuki Kurige!”* [Yoshihiro’s steed]

Yoshihiro who was standing in front of death managed to avoid the onslaught. Yoshihiro’s beloved war horse, as if it had already become a part of her own body, bent its knees and twisted its back.

Yoshihiro managed to dodge both attacks in the nick of time.

*“Back Sword Defense Art!”*

When Yoshihiro avoided the barrage, *“Kill Shimazu Yoshihiro,”* Ito Sukeyasu swung his sword and lowered it towards her neck while shouting, *“You managed to dodge it? You monster!”* A moment later, a heavy kick struck Yuukisaki Masaie’s body, and he fell from his horse. At that moment, Ito Sukenobu who was standing dumbfounded while holding his spear received a short sword stabbed on his forehead.

It was frighteningly fast. Like a flowing water faster than one person’s breath, the second in command as well as the strongest spear master of the Ito Clan fell.

*“General of the Ito Army, I will kill you! Your time of death is here! Prepare yourself!”*

*Uooooo, Yoshihiro Hime-sama!* Shimazu’s soldiers roared loudly.

The Ito Army was not able to understand what had happened for a while. They managed to regain their senses when they saw Yoshihiro rush in with an expression like a demon accompanied by her vassals. Though they did not want to accept the reality, panic soon began to spread among them.

Shimazu’s main unit had been gradually getting almost destroyed by the Sagara Army. No matter how many famous generals were killed, as long as the supreme commander Ito Sukeyasu was still alive, the Ito Clan should still be able to win.

However, because Ito Sukeyasu had received a report, *“Sagara’s forces have come,”* his premonition of defeat became a soaring feeling of victory. Or perhaps the fate of the Ito Clan’s defeat simply couldn’t be changed.

The main unit of Ito’s armies that numbered 3,000 men began to collapse and continuously be routed. They also couldn’t hold Sagara’s army safe.

On the contrary, the panicking Ito's armies fled to various directions and blocked the Sagara Army's path of retreat.

The Sagara Army was trapped under the situation where they couldn't advance nor retreat.

Because the commander and second-in-command had been killed, there was no other person who could maintain the army from collapsing.

At the moment, Sagara's 500 soldiers got trapped under the formation of Tsuru no Buse instantly.

*"That is. Shimazu Yoshihiro... To kill 3 people instantly without mercy..."*

*"That woman. Her swordmanship has become stronger than before! To think that Marume would teach that sword technique to the bitter enemy of the Sagara Clan!"*

*"What's going on, Yoshihi?"*

*"Marume Kurando, the founder of that sword technique, was once a vassal of the Sagara Clan! Although he spread his teachings to every part of Kyushu, there was a certain princess general who was able to master it in such a short time. That Shimazu Yoshihiro is truly a Valkyrie."*

Yoshiharu realized it for the first time the differences of the samurai in Kyushu at this battlefield.

*"Could the general and his second in command be easily killed like this? A princess could easily lift her hands to kill enemies? This is really different from the battle in Honshuu!"*

But it was too late.

The Sagara troops had been swallowed by the crowd of the retreating Ito Army.

The lives of the 500 soldiers and Sagara Yoshihi were already in a precarious situation.

*I see. This is Kyushu. If this continues, Yoshihi will be killed! I can't let this happen.*

*It is because I couldn't convince Yoshihi to retreat. Or rather, I naively believed that we could still win. I thought too light about the people of Kyushu.* While Yoshiharu was grinding his teeth in shame, thinking of how sorry he felt after Soun had warned him, a lone horseman came charging through in suicide attack. It was Shimazu Yoshihiro. Shimazu Yoshihiro was a princess general of the Shura country. In the battlefield, she did not give any mercy unlike Uesugi Kenshin.

The chances were in ten out of ten, they will be killed. *But whatever happens, I must protect Yoshihi.* “*Always protect a woman without fail,*” along with other reasons, Yoshiharu felt determined.

*“Yoshihi, I will protect the rear. Because I have changed the history by bringing the Sagara Army to the battlefield that the commander of the Ito Clan was slain. I will open a way to retreat. You must escape now!”*

*“Yoshiharu, it is not your fault. Because the military commander was slain, the Ito Army fell into confusion. This is the weakness of a joint battle. The Sagara Army did not lose.”*

*“Idiot, do not follow me!”*

*“I won’t let you go! I do not know why, but I will protect you.”*

*“Isn’t that my line? Hurry and go back to Higo!”*

*“It’s useless! If you get caught, the possibility of your survival will disappear. The same thing can be said to me, but if we stick together, we could have a chance to survive.”*

*“Yoshihi, what the heck are you talking about?”*

*“For me, I hold a different belief from the other Shura that when I die, I will have no regret. Didn’t I tell you? ‘Living’ is a principle. Both the meaning and will to live will be gone if people do not survive while searching for it. That is why I always found a way to survive.”*

Yoshihi put down her spear and stepped down from her horse.

Sagara’s 500-men army was personally trained in military arts by Soun. They understood, *“Even if we run or fight here, the result will always be my death.”*

Yoshihi was adored by her vassals and her people, so the 500 men were ready to share their fate with the commander and throw away their weapons along with Yoshihi. Although as a Shura of Kyushu, this was considered as a shameful act. Rather than to save oneself and abandon their leader, it was better to improve Shimazu’s impression of them by surrendering, it was what Yoshihi thought

It showed just how much they wanted to save Yoshihi.

*“I surrender. If wished so, then behead me. But this person is an unrelated traveler. I want you to spare him along with the soldiers.”*

Sagara Yoshihi was accustomed to this situation. Even when she was held by the Shimazu Army, her determination did not waver in protecting Yoshiharu.

Yoshiharu also, *“It is different! I incited Yoshihi to join this war; she should have returned to Hitoyoshi Castle! That is how it was supposed to be,”* begged Yoshihi.

*“Sagara Yoshihi, it has been quite a while. It is your misfortune that you kept your promise with the Ito Clan. And you who is standing next to Sagara Yoshihi, who are you?”*

The voice of the princess general was clear and stern.

Yoshiharu looked up.

*“I am Sagara Yoshiharu. I am a vassal of the Oda Clan and the man who came from the future.”*

Even after defeating Ito Army and virtually conquering Hyuga, Shimazu Yoshihiro had yet to shed any drop of sweat.

She possessed burning, sharp, and intense eyes comparable to Nobuna.

*“The male Sagara Yoshiharu? When Iehisa came to the capital, were you the one who took care of her? But you said such a strange thing. A man who came from the future should not exist! All instances of human life happened at this moment. The things about the past and the future are just made up by people’s mind.”*

The fighting spirit that Yoshihiro let out when she had been killing enemies and ending the war couldn’t be felt from her body anymore.

On the contrary, when she looked at the mountain of her enemies’ and allies’ corpses, Yoshihiro clenched her lips, and tears accumulated on her eyes.

Without cursing destiny and dreaming of a peaceful world which hadn’t been seen yet while rejecting the beliefs in miracles. Every anguish and grief born from the burden of being a princess general from the country of Shura was shouldered by her will. And without wavering in front of that great burden, she moved and carried out her role without hesitation.

Those eyes said it all.

Yoshiharu thought that everyone in Shimazu Army was willing to offer their life for her.

*“Another Sagara Yoshiharu. Although miracles were said to happen when Amano-Iwato opened, I do not believe in it. When that miracle happened, the ash of Sakurajima covered the sky of Satsuma and blurred the view. It was said to be the blessing of the Inari god.”*

Though her eyes turned wet when she looked at the dead bodies of her enemies and allies, it turned cold as soon as she saw Yoshiharu.

*“This Shimazu Yoshihiro does not believe in any miracles nor myth. People can only live in the present and only in that moment. Thoughts of future that come from the distant past are merely the product of people’s minds. It is impossible for me to go into the past, and there is no eternal life in the future. We live only at this moment now. Things like your entering an eternal life after your death are just things made up by Namban missionaries and confuse me. As such, I will rather kill you now.”*

*“Say what you want that I am just a liar. But I did come from the future. It is not a lie nor trickery.”*

*“I do not believe it. But even though you claim that you came from the future, I see no benefit in keeping you alive. This world here is just a past for you and if it were to be interfered by your hands, it would create an error. Because you try to interfere with the lives that we have gone through until now, you are much more arrogant than the Namban missionary.”*

*It is a good point, Yoshiharu thought so.*

*“Such wickedness! The history will be created by us who live here and now! I do not want a clairvoyant who came from the future to interfere with our life! We the Shimazu Clan have been fighting over this land, spilling our blood for 400 years! An unknown traveler like you has no right to interfere with our life!”*

Yoshiharu blinked his eyes.

The princess general known as Shimazu Yoshihiro was an embodiment of pure crystal strong will. Oda Nobuna also possessed the same strong will, not believing in prophecies and personally trying to open the possibilities with her own hands. On the other hand, Shimazu Yoshihiro was a lot extremer than her. The Japanese should decide the fate of Japan. It was stubborn yet it was also fastidious.

*So this is Shimazu Yoshihiro, Yoshiharu forgot his own situation and sighed in admiration.*

*“Shimazu Yoshihiro. It seems that no matter what I will say, you will not listen to it. You have good eyes. They’re the eyes of a hero. You probably have beaten me in terms of will and determination.”*

*“Are you praising me? Even so, I will not say thanks.”*

*“Please spare Yoshihi’s life. It’s just like what you have said. If I didn’t interfere with this matter, Yoshihi wouldn’t have entered this war. Let the history return to the way it once was.”*

*“I will not listen to your request. Sagara Yoshihi’s fate shall be decided by my decision.”*

Shimazu Yoshihiro...pulled out the Odachi from her waist.

*"Stop! Don't kill Yoshiharu! He is not a Shura!" Yoshihi was screaming.*

*"Shimazu Yoshihiro. On what basis can you say that a man from the future like him has no right to intervene in our problem? No matter whether if he lives in the present or the future, he is still a Japanese. He is no different from us. On the contrary, we and Yoshiharu are connected by both blood and heart for several hundred years."*

*"Sagara Yoshihi, you who does not trust her own family and relatives, why are you speaking this nonsense now? The curse of a Shura is born from family bloodline; didn't you hold antipathy against it because it was disgusting for you?"*

*"I don't know. I don't even know what I should say to you. Although he is not my retainer, he shouldered the responsibility of this loss and to die in this battle, all to make sure that I will survive. As the 18<sup>th</sup> head of my clan, I must respond to his help with good faith."*

*"Even if the Sagara Clan would end at its 18<sup>th</sup> generation?"*

*"I have just met Yoshiharu, and I do not understand much about his personality. But he was willing to abandon his chance to go back to the future and chose to stay in this world. Even so, to say that he is not qualified to intervene with history. Only those words that you must take back, Shimazu Yoshihiro!"*

*"Yoshihi? What happened to your plan to survive? The words that you were screaming now, they don't seem to be an act,"* her elegant expression as the head of Sagara Clan fell off and exposed an emotional and tearful face. Yoshiharu was surprised.

Yoshiharu thought, *I regret not being able to see Nobuna's Tenka Fubu be achieved, but to think that there is someone who can understand my heart like this. It feels so rewarding.*

Yoshihiro blushed and whispered, *"I know that. I take back my words, it was stupid."*

Yoshiharu felt admiration for a second time. This time to Shimazu Yoshihiro.

*Yoshihi's affection and reason were transmitted to me. At the same time, I feel like apologizing. It seems that princess generals aren't all about being good at military.*

*"Very well. I will treat this as an exception. I also don't want to kill two people who are desperately partial to one another. As I've promised, I will let one person live. But the people of Satsuma Hayato are not so lenient to let you two be spared."*

Yoshiharu had faced so many impeded deaths, and yet he had always been able to miraculously survive until now. Goemon, Inuchiyo, Hanbei, Juubei and many other princess generals had rescued his life.

Until this time, he had always boasted about bringing out the best result, *while in truth, I have always been saved by them*, Yoshiharu noticed.

*At the end of my trip, the end of my life is too abrupt. To perish at Kyushu because of things unrelated to the Oda Clan. However, this is the life during the Sengoku era. Despite being a princess general whom he had just met, exchanging his life for Sagara Yoshihi did not feel so bad. Perhaps Kai Soun who lives as a Shura and massacred many people has finally found hope and future in that innocent young girl. A princess general who shares the same name as mine. Perhaps this is what is called 'fate.'*

Yoshiharu prepared his mind and looked up.

The promise made with Kai Soun, there was no intention of betraying his trust.

*"If there is a person whom you should kill, it should be me. Whether I am a man from the future or not is nothing but a trivial thing. If a man and a woman were to stand together at the battlefield and face death, it should be the man to have it."*

*"Wait, Yoshiharu! I am just a bit too brave! The words that I let out were just an accident! Here is the solution! Let me negotiate!"*

*"Yoshihi. If I let you die and beg for my life, then I can no longer call myself as Sagara Yoshiharu. Even if I live, I would be nothing but a walking corpse."*

Shimazu Yoshihiro nodded.

*"Well said. I acknowledge you as a warrior now. So write your death poem."*

*"I don't think I could. Please just do it."*

*"Please wait for what I am going to say!"*

*"Sagara Yoshiharu, I shall send you back to where you belong."*

With her blade poised as if it would split the heaven and earth to halves, Yoshihiro swung it downward towards Yoshiharu's neck with a monkey-like clamor.

## Chapter 3

### The Kingdom of Otomo Sorin

At the time Sagara Yoshiharu drifted to the shore of Higo, met Sagara Yoshihi, and participated in the Battle of Kizakihara against the Shimazu army.

The diplomat convoy, along with Kanbei Kuroda and Frois, had arrived at the biggest trade city and harbor of Bungo Province safely.

The relationship between the Otomo and Oda Clans, whose lords were known as “economic daimyos” who exploited foreign trade, was significantly good.

Most of the goods from Namban were carried out to Sakai via the trade ports of Kyushu such as Hakata and Nagasaki.

Since Otomo Sorin controlled the biggest Namban trade in Japan, Nobuna whose trading center was at Sakai treated Otomo Sorin with a humble and masquerading attitude, *Money is friend and I bow my head to money*. The Oda Clan and Sakai were acting politely as expected since they were a more valuable client than anyone else.

The Kanbei Kuroda party which had only arrived at the province was met by many senior statesmen and merchants and received a lively welcome.

Firework were exuberantly lit and exhibited. Was it because so many merchants settled down in the town. Or was it Sorin’s hobby?

*“Simon-san. Look at the scenery of this town.”*

*“As usual, half of this city is totally like a Namban city. Moreover, the other half is filled with the wonders of the City of Ming [City of Ming = the capital Nanjing]. There aren’t only Europeans. Along the streets, there are Koreans, Filipinos, Cambodians, and Siamese. Merchants from countries across the sea gathered in this town.”*

*“In Europe, Otomo Sorin-sama is more famous than Nobuna-sama. I heard that in there, there was a map which recorded a country named Bungo located at the west side of Zipangu. I finally understand.”*

*“It’s been a long time since I visited Kyushu!” Kanbei’s motivated mind shouted. “Frois. That one is the Chinese town where all of the merchants gather. The residence of those merchants in Bungo is at Sakuramachi. The area where that grand church is built is on the Namban town. By the way, the name of that church is Deus Temple. The purpose of that building*

*is to develop talented delegates to meet the pope,” she waved her fan as she introduced many famous places of the town.*

A large, old general with a gray beard, who was being carried out in a mikoshi-like carriage, appeared in front of Kanbei and the others.

He seemed to be unable to walk on his own, but there was no doubt that he was a veteran military officer.

*“Thank you for coming, people of the Oda Clan. I am a retainer of the Otomo Clan, Tachibana Dosetsu. During my prime, I was once struck by a lightning, leaving me dying. With only one functional leg, I have to use this portable shrine. My apology.”*

The old general who was seated upon the portable shrine was Otomo’s strongest warrior, Tachibana Dosetsu.

His abnormal life force still survived through even after being hit by a lightning and thereafter suffering hemiplegia. He was a leader who always stood on his army’s forefront and pursued the enemy general’s neck. *“I shall die for the old man’s sake,”* the soldiers yearned for his natural virtue. He held an unwavering loyalty to Otomo Sorin. He was the famous general who was respected as the absolute among all of the Shuras of Kyushu with fear and awe.

But regrettably, he was an old person now. [His speech personality is similar with Saito Dousan’s.]

Dosetsu should’ve naturally retired. But the Otomo Clan had passed over their former glory of hegemony over six countries in Kyushu. Now the Shimazu and Ryuzoji Clans had suddenly risen in power, wherefore Dosetsu encouraged his old bones to serve Sorin his last service.

*“Muu! Isn’t it Dosetsu? It’s me, Kanbei Kuroda. This Simon once had had to also sit on a portable shrine before, but I recovered thanks to Arima’s hot springs!”*

*“Oh. Aren’t you Harima’s boy who studied the strange Namban language under the Nambans?”*

*“Whoa! I’m not a boy! Simon is a princess general! Also, don’t mention Harima!”*

*“You still shout loudly that makes one’s ears in pain as always. But surely you have been successfully promoted as a diplomat of the Oda Clan?”*

*“How rude! I never shout as loud as Dosetsu does.”*

*“I see. So where is Sagara Yoshiharu?”*

*“Sagara Yoshiharu got shipwrecked.”*

*“Eh? Nanjatoo [whaat]?! An important messenger getting shipwrecked, and just letting him be like that? How foolish!”*

*“It’s not a problem. Since he should be still alive, we will send out a search party for now! There is no time to wait for him; let us have an audience with Otomo Sorin immediately!”*

However, when he took a glance at the face of the Namban missionary Frois, Dosetsu let out a deep sigh.

*“I say, Harima boy.”*

*“Don’t say Harima! Call me Kanbei or Simon!”*

*“Kanbei. I don’t want to increase the number of missionaries who serve under Hime-sama anymore. Ever since Hime-sama converted to Christianity, the Otomo Clan has always been split into two perfectly. There are the pro-Christian faction and anti-Christian faction. Hime-sama has moved the administrative office from this town to Niu Island close to Hyuga, and built an impenetrable fortress there. It is in order to stop the Shimazu Clan’s northern advancement, who wishes to ban Christianity.”*

*“For the things I have done to have no meaning...”* Frois’s head drooped.

*“Well, don’t worry about that, just show us the way. I and Frois have come to stop Gaspard and the other reckless missionaries. So as to say, we are your allies.”*

*“Oho. I am grateful. I thought you came to assist Gaspard for sure. It was my misunderstanding!”*

*“Today, Sorin is also in this town, right?”*

*“But, Gaspard and the missionaries in question will also be attending. Missionaries are supposed to only spread the teachings of Christianity and establish trade; they should never intervene in military affairs. But this guy is different. He took the post as the military advisor to the Otomo Clan and began to advise Hime-sama to construct a kingdom of God at Hyuga. He cleverly kidnapped the first Japanese Christian Omura Sumitada at Hizen. He is going to donate the land of Nagasaki to Dominus Association. There is a rumor that he is going to use it as protection against the Ryuzoji Clan’s invasion. I don’t know whether this province will be snatched away by him sometime soon either!”*

*“Even Nagasaki Port has become a part of Dominus Association.”*

*“It is so. Now the Portuguese fleet is defending Nagasaki Port. After Gaspard came to Kyushu, things have suddenly become like this.”*

*“Xavier-sama...”* Frois inadvertently looked up to the sky.

*“Gaspard-sama is going to colonize Nagasaki, Simon-san. It is not only as a trading port, but he is going to establish it as a military base for the Portuguese and Hispania in Zipangu.”*

*“Hmmm. But for what purpose? It is impossible to invade the whole Japan with only one or two strongholds being established in one day. Gaspard should’ve understood that.”*

*“Isn’t he going to make use of Kyushu’s war situation to gradually increase the number of his bases?”*

*“Sim. It appears that Gaspard intends to fuel a confrontation between the anti-Christian and pro-Christian daimyos.”*

*“Yes. It’s a serious situation. If the wise Nobuna knows this. It is possible that Christianity would be prohibited...”*

*“Even if the religion wouldn’t be prohibited, Oda Nobuna would never approve of religious factions to take up arms no matter what! It is wherefore that she was about to burn Enryakuji and made Honbyo Temple to disarm themselves. If we leave Gaspard as it is, then there would a battle between Oda Nobuna and the Christian daimyos of Kyushu.”*

*“Simon also thinks that it is necessary to avoid it for Zipangu. If so, then Christianity would never find its roots in this country for eternity.”*

*“He is no longer a missionary but an invader! He is completely different from the noble Xavier who taught Christianity to Hime-sama! Hime-sama is a fool!” Dosetsu barked, shaking his pointed moustache.*

*“Damn loud!”* The samurais who were responsible of carrying the portable shrine were covering their ears and shook.

*“The progression of this situation is faster than Simon has thought. Frois is a direct pupil of Xavier. Simon shall back up the confrontation between these two people.”*

*“I say, Kanbei! It’s good to make a country rich through trading with Nambans, but it cannot be compared with the lands being robbed by the Europeans and Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples being destroyed! Hime-sama did not like wars originally. She was frightened of her circumstances where she had to continue fighting rebels and enemy countries as the daimyo of a country of Shuras. Formerly, Xavier from Namban healed the princess’s heart. But now, Gaspard took the chance to enter the holes of her heart.”*

*“Sorin is a maiden. Gaspard is a young man. Did he use such method to dominate her mind?”*

*“No. As one would expect from a missionary, there was no seduction. Hime-sama and her faith will be enraged if he were to show lust. He is a natural gentleman with fastidious wisdom. Besides, since Hime-sama has always been troubled by men who have been aiming for the seat of Bungo’s king, she is extremely androphobic. As for that person, he used a more horrifying technique to erode Hime-sama’s mind.”*

*“If it is Simon then she will understand it during the meeting,”* Frois nodded, though frightened.

Within the center of the town, there was a magnificent mansion which had become Sorin’s second residence.

It’s a huge place with a combination of Japanese and Namban architectural styles.

The outside was Japanese-styled but through the gate, it was almost completely Namban-type. It was flooded with buildings filled with exoticism such as the chapel, where the statue of Mary stood, in the palace and a fountain park in a very Namban way. There was a choir of boys and girls chanting a hymn to meet the messenger in the garden.

But there was a subtle tension floating here and there despite with such splendid appearance. Because there was an opposition within the clan against the Christian policies that cast over a shadow.

When Tachibana Dosetsu led Frois to a large hall with stone pavement along with Kanbei, *“Hime-sama!”* He shouted in a loud voice. *“Paoo!”* The beast unleashed a roar. It was a cry that Kanbei was familiar with.

The queen of Bungo – Otomo Sorin was riding on a huge, exotic beast.

That was an elephant which did not originally live in Japan.

It has a long nose, big ears, and a magnificent body.

*“What is this?”* Kanbei was shaken. *“Hime-sama’s eccentric behavior has become flashier,”* Dosetsu also sighed.

*“It’s been a long time, Kuroda Kanbei. No, Don Simon. It seems that you were able to demonstrate your talent under Oda Nobuna. This elephant is a beast that I got from Cambodia. I’m keeping it as a pet.”*

A fair-skinned, oval-faced with long eyelashes.

A thin body wrapped in a Namban coat like a nun’s. Otomo Sorin, who held both rosary beads [Catholic counterpart of Buddhist monks’ beads but with a crucifix] that had a black luster and a Tanegashima in

her arms together, looked down upon Kanbei and Frois with eyes tinged with melancholy, and climbed down from the back of the elephant.

*“Just like the Queen of Sheba,”* Frois let out a voice.

*“What’s with this animal; it’s dangerous, Sorin.”*

*“Hey, Simon. You mustn’t call me Sorin anymore. I was formally baptized; my baptismal name is Don Francisco. It’s because I received that name from Xavier-sama. But I call myself Sorin. Because I like how it sounds.”* [Note: Sorin refers to herself as “Sorin,” in proximate third person.]

*“Although the princess has a mature look, her voice is unexpectedly like a young child’s,”* Frois was surprised.

With a high intellect equal to Oda Nobuna’s, like an imbalanced little girl with an unstable and delicate personality. It was evident from her expression.

At a glance, there was a strong-willed, sharp gaze behind her eyes as they wandered around in many directions with constant shaking.

*She fears other people,* Frois felt sorry for Sorin.

*“I appreciate the tea bowl souvenir, Simon.”*

The elephant extended its nose and skillfully took the tea set gift up from Kanbei’s hands, and put it on top of Sorin’s bountiful chest. [Not a Dragon Nest reference, absolutely not]

*“Damn, Sorin’s breasts have grown! It has already surpassed Frois’s! Why could Simon’s chest never be on the same level as Takenanaka Hanbei’s flat chest?”* Kanbei stomped on the ground. *“I would like it smaller though,”* Frois thought.

*“Simon. I shall give a Namban pumpkin for gratitude. Yes. It has a bright orange color but it’s very sweet.”*

Sorin put her favorite vegetable pumpkin on top of the elephant’s trunk.

Pumpkin had been spoken as *tabahanawahata* [東塙秦] with a rural accent but was later known as a vegetable called pumpkin. It was a new culinary ingredient that was introduced to Japan when a Portuguese ship gave it to Sorin.

The elephant skillfully used its nose to carry the pumpkin to Kanbei’s hands.

*“Whoa, how scary; why does this pumpkin have a humanoid face with a hollowed mouth and nose? Sorin, you mustn’t play with food!”*

*“Why? Isn’t it cute?”*

*“Are you sick?”*

*“Sorin sold this pumpkin extensively in the market as Bungo’s specialty. Can’t a ghost costume be made with pumpkin? I wanted to participate in the Azuchi Festival where many people who were wearing costumes gathered.”* [Again, Sorin refers to herself in proximate third person]

When one looked carefully, in many places around the town and palaces, there were a lot of strange, green and orange vegetables with human faces hung, decorating the area.

*“You mean, all of these are pumpkins?”* Kanbei was amazed.

When Sorin was absorbed in something, she would do it thoroughly.

*“By the way, where is Sagara Yoshiharu? I am looking forward to see the long-awaited man from the future, but I can’t see him.”*

*“When we were sailing, there were a lot of circumstances with the Chosokabe. He will be a little late, but he will come later.”*

*“Oh well. Because Simon is here, it’s all good. Even if I haven’t been told, I understand Oda Nobuna’s request. It’s to attack the Mori Clan from behind, right? With Uesugi Kenshin, Takeda Shingen, and the Mori Clan, which are three major forces, attacking simultaneously, the Oda Clan’s fate is like a candle before the wind. This Sorin holds the key to decide the conclusion of this world’s battle.”*

*I have solved it,* Sorin laughed.

*“It is so. As for you, though your actions are slow, you are quick to make an argument!”*

*“Of course, it’s not a problem since there is nothing that Sorin can’t do. A battle is coming for Sorin. After all, the Ito Clan which is the arch nemesis and hindrance of the Shimazu Clan got defeated at the Battle of Hyuga. If we begin a battle against the Mori Clan, the Ryuzoji Clan might sneak in. It’s dangerous. Oda Nobuna held a magnificent feast, right? So what will I get? I want Satsuma, Osumi, and Hyuga!”*

*“Wa-Wait a second! The Ito Clan got defeated by Shimazu?”*

*“Yes. The Ito Clan was defeated by the Shimazu Clan and fell despite having the upper hand of 10 times the enemy’s military power. The people from the Ito Clan who had survived fled into this Bungo. Despairing over this world or getting tired of these chaotic times, the number of Christians keeps on increasing.”*

*“Damn it, I was one step behind,”* Kanbei scratched her head.

*“But it’s alright, Simon. Because there is the Kunikuzushi [Destroyer of Provinces] that Gaspard gave to me. It won’t lose to Shimazu.”*

*“An ominous-sounding name; it wouldn’t be good if Bungo collapses...” Dosetsu gave the order to bring the new weapon into the main hall.*

*“It’s begun; Ojii-san has complained. Look at it, Simon.”*

Kanbei was very fond of Namban weapons. She took a look at the *Kunikuzushi*, and her heart was fascinated by it. “*Mufu*,” she clung to its huge weapon frame.

*“Kunikuzushi! It’s the latest cannon from Namban; it’s big! The real weapon is really different! It’s even larger than the cannon that Simon designed and put on the Tekkosen.”*

*“It’s too heavy; it’s impossible to put it on a Japanese boat [wasen]. The Shimazu Clan mass produced Tanegashimas and attacked using firepower. Sorin will equip Kunikuzushi to Niu Island’s castle and turn it to an impregnable fortress. It will be an indomitable stronghold like Constantinople. It’s a perfect defense system that can last under siege for 100 years, or even 1000 years. Therefore, Sorin will change Niu Castle into a water fort. Constantinople fell against the Orban artillery, but the reverse shall be done with Sorin’s fortress. The Orban cannon can protect Sorin’s fortress, right?”*

Frois remembered it and got dizzy.

Tanegashima was not something that missionaries brought to Zipangu. When the ship of a Namban merchant was accidentally stranded on Tanegashima [the name of a place east of Osumi], a few guns were sold to the local Japanese, thus starting its production. The Namban merchant couldn’t have imagined that the people of this land would manufacture a huge number of Tanegashimas for only several years.

*“However, it is obvious that Gaspard is intervening in the civil war despite being a missionary. What happened, Frois? Are you hungry?”*

*“Simon-san. Sorin-sama. A cannon is not something that a missionary should possess.”*

*“Is there such a thing? Didn’t Gaspard say that faith and war were both sides of the same coin? Because Sorin likes peace, I want to remodel Hyuga into a country of Christians quickly without any resistance. If the opponent does not accept it then we must fight. To begin with, Oda Nobuna burnt Enryaku-ji, fought the Honbyo Temple, and defeated the Buddhist power. Isn’t this the same?”*

*“It’s not the same. Nobuna-sama became the infamous Dairokuten Maou [Demon King of the Sixth Heaven] in order to disarm the religious factions. She believes that that is the way to end Zipangu’s war. Sorin-sama. There shouldn’t be any war between the Christians and anti-Christians in Zipangu.”*

*"It will become a religious war where none can leave uninvolved. It's like how the Protestants and Catholics were fighting each other to obtain lands in Europe," Frois was speaking about it, but was also very ashamed of it.*

*"No. Sorin wants to build my own kingdom. Sorin hasn't been able to spend a day in peace ever since I was born as the Otomo Clan's legitimate child. I have always been afraid of betrayal. In a country of Shuras, parents, retainers and even brothers are only traitors. Therefore, in order to not be rebelled or disinherited, or other scary experiences, I must build a kingdom of "Sorin," not of the "Otomo Clan."*

*"Therefore, all retainers and vassals must be converted to Christians. To become a resident of Sorin's kingdom, a test must be done. People who don't do that are the enemy," Sorin murmured as she received the tea set from Kanbei.*

*"What are you talking about, Sorin? You are blessed with servants who have unequalled loyalty. In the Otomo Clan, there are veteran retainers like Dosetsu who continues to fight for you even if he is suffering from hemiplegia [paralysis on either half of the body, the whole body version of Bell's palsy] . Do you not believe in their loyalty? To hold a belief is your own freedom, but you cannot force it to other people! Not to mention, you want to test their loyalty by converting them to Christians! What people want to believe in is something that they should choose in their own accord!"*

*"... Simon grew up being spoiled by your father; you wouldn't understand."*

*"We both keep badmouthing each other; it seems that Sorin and Simon aren't friends, uwaaaah!"*

*"Ah. My bad. Although Sorin is a good person, she has a foul mouth, don't you know? Anyway, can you stop fake crying now [not crocodile tears; fake tears]? It's annoying."*

*"There isn't any gentleness in what you've said!"*

*"The southern part of Hyuga has been occupied by the Shimazu soldiers. Now, Sorin has gotten the northern part of Hyuga from the Ito Clan. Instead of exile, they ceded their territory to me. I must move. I have sent troops to Hyuga, and will fight a decisive battle with the Shimazu Clan. This is a perfect opportunity to establish the kingdom of God at Hyuga. But I've heard rumors that Oda Nobuna has been giving bigger rewards than Hyuga."*

*"...Tachibana Dosetsu, when did Sorin become like this? Sorin of that time was the predecessor of Torres who is the manager of Zipangu branch post of Dominus Association. She built hospitals and, with the cooperation of the Christians, instituted good governance. She should have been a hero who completely fought for the Christians' kingdom already!"*

*"Harima's young boy.About Hime-sama. My power are just not enough..." Dosetsu lay down and shook his head.*

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Otomo Sorin was born with a fate smeared by blood.

The Otomo Clan was Kyushu's greatest power.

A Shura among Shuras, it's a clan that stood on the peak of warriors.

Sorin was born as the legitimate child of Otomo Clan. Sooner or later, she must succeed the family estate of the Otomo Clan – she must fight many powerful enemies within Kyushu.

Sorin had high intelligence since she was young, but she didn't have a strong physique to endure battles between Shuras who staked their very lives. She did not want to succeed the family head. If possible, she wanted to enter a Buddhist temple and enter the path of belief. But because she was too intelligent, she couldn't harbor faith for Buddhism inside her.

Sorin wasn't able to find a place for her belief in war.

And so, Sorin's fate darkened even further.

Sorin's father bestowed the family inheritance to her younger step-brother because Sorin was scared of war. In other words, the second wife had become the favorite.

In a daimyo clan, there was always an internal dispute over the family inheritance.

It's a trial that Nobuna, Takeda Shingen, and even the young Date Masamune had experienced. However, the Otomo Clan was a lineage of Kyushu's Shuras; they suffered from tragedies that couldn't be compared with these various other clans. Kyushu was a harsh place.

Sorin might not only be disinherited but, in the worst case, would also be killed by her father.

The young Sorin was frightened under the shadow of her father every day and night.

And then that incident happened.

It was soon after Sorin had been demoted by her father and driven out to Honjo.

The group of retainers under Sorin's faction who opposed Sorin's disinheritance rebelled in Honjo.

Sorin's father, her step brother, and also his step brother's real mother were killed by their hands.

This incident was dubbed the “Mysterious Second Floor Collapse” in Bungo.

It was caused by the revolting vassals who killed everyone.

Fortunately, the demoted Sorin was able to survive due to the eldest child succession policy of the elders and could inherit the Otomo Clan’s family estate.

After this great incident, a suspicion circulated throughout Kyushu.

*Sorin who refused to be disinherited moved her vassals to support her and kill her father, younger step-brother, and his real mother.*

Indeed.

The young Sorin who shouldered the suspicion of killing her own father inherited the Otomo Clan’s family estate and was made the king of Bungo.

Carrying a deep scar and perplexity in her mind, she had to live every day with conflict after conflict until her life would be exhausted.

The famous general Tachibana Dosetsu became aware of the abnormality inside Sorin’s mind, *With the way things are, Hime-sama’s mind won’t last for even a year,*” and grew impatient.

Could she fall in love with a man?

Impossible. Sorin, who had been about to be disinherited by her father and deprived of the clan’s family estate by her younger stepbrother, along with the gruesome revolt of her vassals, began to distrust men.

Did she need to beseech Buddhism for help?

But Sorin was a clever person; furthermore, the intelligent couldn’t throw away the sense of worldliness [common sense], for she was born with a lot of ego [sense of oneself]. The reason why she was disliked by her father was because of her “ego.” It was impossible to achieve the quiet state of enlightenment through abdication.

How about awakening the ambition to unify Kyushu and letting the torment be forgotten by burying it under battles? However, Sorin hated bloody conflicts. Although she’d fought battles in order to protect herself from her enemies due to cowardice, she was not a girl who could live for the sake of war. Even if she went to battle with enthusiasm and courage, she would suddenly get depressed. That was impossible too.

But there was an encounter that would support the broken heart of the unstable Sorin.

At was the encounter with Xavier, a missionary, who went to Kyushu across the sea from the west.

As for Sorin, she believed in neither the Christians' god nor Heaven at first.

*What were written in the Bible are just stories*, her intellect denied that belief and abandoned the thought.

But inside the human called Xavier who continued to walk around the earth on a long journey despite being whipped in persecution and emaciated, there was something that she found within her cowardice nature.

When an audience was granted to Xavier, Sorin was conveyed with some words from Xavier.

What were those words? Were those words of encouragement that no one else but Sorin knew? Dosetsu hypothesized so.

Wasn't the driving force Hime-sama to become a benevolent ruler and mature conqueror of Kyushu the words of Xavier?

Therefore, in order to protect the Christians, Hime-sama herself converted to Christianity.

But that was only a conjecture.

The truths were all hidden inside Sorin's heart.

Including the truth of whether she really killed her own father...

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*"Simon, Frois. Please negotiate with Gaspard after this! Because if Gaspard is Sorin's military advisor now, he is the one who is called the strategist, right? He knows a lot about military affairs and history. He is a person whom I can depend on. He is much more reliable than what my father was. But isn't it quite particular for the queen of a Christian kingdom to be celibate and remain a virgin? I have been wanting to take a husband."*

*"Wait a second, Sorin! The negotiation of the Oda and Otomo Clans will be done directly with you! A missionary will participate in the matter of this military alliance!"*

*“Even if it doesn’t go that way, it will still be done. Now is the time for a nap and confession. In addition, a sleep for tonight, Simon. Because this is a preparation for the entertainment.”*

Sorin let out a big yawn as she pulled the elephant’s ear.

The elephant let out a cry, thereafter leaving the great hall.

*“Kanbei, Frois. Now, Hime-sama has entrusted military affairs to Gaspard. She has taken over a piece of Hyuga, destroying all the Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples of it, and is now possessed by the dream of gathering people who won’t betray her by founding a country that will become a kingdom of Christians. For an old person like me who have a deep belief to Hachiman-no-Kami [Shinto god of war], this is a nightmare.”* [For any lurking grammar nazi, the relative pronoun “who” substitutes the antecedent “me,” a prepositional object.]

Frois nodded painfully to Tachibana Dosetsu’s words.

*“However, this is also my responsibility. The more I admonish her, the more Hime-sama becomes obstinate. Once, I let Hime-sama keep a ferocious monkey. It attacked the retainers when it went wild. Wanting to stop it in order to not sully the pride of a samurai who didn’t listen to an advice, I promptly killed the monkey with an iron fan when it attacked me. However, the animal that Hime-sama has brought this time is an elephant from Cambodia. It cannot be killed with an iron fan. If I pull a sword in the presence of Hime-sama, it will be regarded as a rebellion.”*

*“The master and their vassals are both to be blamed; Kyushu’s samurais are really violent,”* Kanbei was amazed.

*“I have relentlessly admonished her too much,”* Dosetsu dropped his shoulders.

*“Sorin-sama will create another country in Zipangu. Rather than Sorin-sama, it would be more appropriate to say that it would be Gaspard. He intends to make Hyuga a new country of Zipangu which is different in a sense compared to Settsu or Mino. Perhaps, in order to make a large European military base in Nagasaki. The Crusade also occupied lands of Islam through military might, building new Christian countries: the Latin Kingdom and Antioch Dukedom.”*

*“Crusade?!”* Dosetsu shouted loudly.

*“You’re hurting my ears!”* Kanbei complained, but Dosetsu ignored it.

*“Crusade! It’s a mysterious word that is well known in Bungo! One of it is the crest of the Shimazu Clan, the Shuras who are feared for their brave heroism and prowess, The Circle Cross! The other one is the name of the Christian corps formed by Gaspard to subjugate Hyuga, The Lily Crusade!”* [Crusade, in katakana, is *kuruseidou*; it sounds similarly to the hiragana transliteration of cross, クロス, which is pronounced as “kurosu.”]

*“In other words, Shimazu is being provoked with “a cross coat-of-arms for a cross coat-of-arms;” just what kind of person is Gaspard? He isn’t just some ordinary missionary,” Kanbei clicked her tongue.*

*“Hime-sama’s order is absolute. I shall take you to Gaspard’s place. But be careful as to not let your heart be captivated. Especially Kanbei, beware, hence you won’t get deceived by that person’s words because of your carelessness.”*

The head of Zipangu’s Dominus Association who assumed the post of Otomo Sorin’s military advisor, Gaspard, had been given a tiny, shabby room in the corner of Otomo’s mansion.

*“It has been a long time, Frois Louis. And to Don Simon, this is our first meeting.”*

Gaspard Cabral.

A young missionary from Portugal.

He made fortunes as a merchant who traveled all over Portugal and India. He was also a scholar who devoted himself on collecting sacred tools, relics and various treasures all over the world, as written in his profile that he made himself, but his true history before becoming a head of Dominus Association was a mystery.

Since the time he joined the Dominus Association in Goa, he became well-versed in the knowledge about the mythical past of the eastern civilization. *“The heretic who dwelled too much in the Orient,” “the Gnostic Cathar,”* an alchemist as well as an astrologist, such bad reputations about him floated around.

In addition, he belonged to the radical party in Dominus Association that engaged itself in colony acquisition as well as missionary works which conspired with the kingdom: the Conquistador faction.

There was a minority in the Dominus Association which valued missionary works, living in honorable poverty without compensation, and had connection with the Spanish royalty and Portuguese regnant household.

This faction seemed to have backed up Gaspard’s rapid promotion behind the scenes.

The interest of Dominus Association which encompassed India to Southeast Asia was to evangelize, spreading it out to Ming Dynasty, the biggest empire in East Asia.

However, with the oriental religions like Confucianism permeating into Ming Dynasty perfectly, it was impossible to spread Christian missionary works there.

At one time, a Catholic sect called Nestorianism had been established in China to some degree. However, the influence of Catholicism began to diminish during the Ming dynasty. [Note: Chrisitanity ≠ Catholicism. Christianity is the religion that believed in Christ as the Son of God, which includes the Roman Catholic, Eastern

Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, and other subdivisions. Furthermore, Ming Dynasty here refers to the biggest state in China, which was once divided to a lot of small and big countries. Hence, Ming Dynasty = country/state. Ming dynasty = the dynasty, or house, of rulers who controlled Ming Dynasty.]

As for Xavier who was one of the founders of Dominus Association, the missionary works hadn't fared well as they wanted, and he died in India.

After the death of Xavier, the Conquistador faction to which Gaspard belonged built a European military base in the golden country Zipangu. They schemed to use missionary works as a pretext to forcibly intervene in the military affairs inside the Spanish armada in the Philippines [a Spanish naval fleet garrisoned in the Philippine colony] and turn Zipangu's army against Ming Dynasty.

At any rate, when the unification of political power was established, Zipangu would be the world's strongest military nation that would become an important key of missionary works in the Orient.

However, as a matter of fact, Gaspard himself had made a simple, fine line to make a clear distinction between himself and the Conquistador faction.

There was a more magnificent plan, and he took it as his sense of mission.

That was why.

The young Namban missionary Gaspard from Europe, whom Tachibana Dosetsu and his vassal corps feared so much, was seen as a clear sage in Kanbei's eyes.

He didn't have eyes filled with burning ambition, only having a calm expression as quiet as the surface of water. A smile which did not contain any little hostility nor fighting spirit against the opposing party; a shabby and plain look. A long silky hair that made one think of him as a herbivore.

It was a man who somehow was reminiscent of the Son of God, who was crucified on a cross. However, Frois was different; when she entered the room, *"Gaspard-sama... Just like what the rumor said, you are a heretic. You aren't a legitimate Catholic clergyman. You are a man who indulges himself in alchemy, Kabbalah, and astrology,"* Frois let out a shaken voice.

*"Frois. I'm not a magician. I merely collect the fragments of wisdom from the fallen Roman Empire, which was lost for eternity. To revive the golden epoch of mankind, it is my job as a scholar."* [Perhaps referring to the Golden Age when Cronus reigned?]

A glass flask and retort.

The innumerable ancient books that were piled up on the wall.

Many polished and processed varieties of stones.

A celestial globe.

A pentagram painted on the floor.

For Kanbei and Sen no Rikyu who had learnt Namban alchemy, they wouldn't see it as a strange room so much. They would think that it was the room of a real Namban scholar.

*"As what I have expected, the afterglow of ancient great wisdom existed at the eastern end of the golden country of Zipangu. The three sacred treasures that were handed down to the Yamato Imperial Palace. Or the summoning of the man from the future Sagara Yoshiharu which was a miracle that Zipangu made itself. The hole that opened up in the sky which was connected to the space-time of the future, have you seen the miracle of the opening of Amano-Iwato? There would never be such a miracle to happen in Europe."*

*"Why did Gaspard-sama do such a terrible thing like that. Excavating the treasures that were laid dormant in the sea, persuading Lion-san with your skillful words, and lastly, cornering Nobuna-sama on the battlefield to use it."*

*"I wanted Sagara Yoshiharu to quietly return to the future. Above all, he is inconvenient to me. Because Sagara Yoshiharu's importance in Zipangu has increased, as a consequence, it ends in my complete defeat."*

Frois was convinced; Gaspard wasn't just about using his intellectual curiosity to gather numerous tricks, but also having a firm will to use to dig out the forbidden knowledge that the churches had sealed away.

Furthermore, it was obvious that Gaspard was a heretic and an alien [someone who's completely different from others].

The evidence could be shown on his own face.

*"What is it? What's wrong with this missionary's face, Frois?"*

*"That's right. Because Simon-san has never seen your face, she hasn't noticed it. Gaspard-sama's 'face...' It's the face of a man who shouldn't live in this world. What kind of method did you use to obtain that 'face?' It couldn't be said as the miracle of faith, Gaspard-sama. You must have used demonic means; if you didn't, then you wouldn't have obtained that 'face.'"*

*"This is exactly the miracle of faith."*

*"No, it's different. Gaspard Cabral-sama. No, Gaspard Coelho-sama. It is expected that Francisco Cabral-sama, a former military personnel, to become the new head of Dominus Association of Zipangu. But Cabral-sama suddenly lost contact during his journey to Zipangu, and instead, you became the chief of the Kyushu branch. You claimed to be the soul of "Cabral" and inherited the name Cabral on the ship. But... I absolutely sensed a scheme of the Conquistador faction. Cabral was once a barbarian adventurer who was not different from a*

*buccaneer. After meeting Xavier-sama, he was admitted as a member of Dominus Association; he began to repent and joined the missionary work."*

*"Frois. The rumor that I have assassinated Cabral-dono is totally groundless. I am just a scholar. Furthermore, poison is out of my specialty. I, at that time, couldn't kill him who was a robust military officer in a narrow cabin."*

*"But anybody will doubt it if they see your face!"*

*"Cabral is a typical racist. Since the beginning when he saw the excellent and rational people of Zipangu, he looked down on them like they were the monkeys of the Orient. With such an attitude, he won't be able to move the heart of this proud-hearted country. If a person like him came over to Zipangu as the chief executive as scheduled, then the activity of Dominus Association and the Christians would be delayed for ten years. Thus, time would be wasted. By the will of God, he disappeared, and I was promoted to the seat of the Kyushu branch's chief thanks to this 'face.'"*

*"No. It was evidently the result of your secret maneuvers and the Conquistador faction, Gaspard-sama. The proof is your appointment as the military adviser of the Otomo Clan! This is beyond the work of a missionary!"*

*"It's a misunderstanding, Frois. I don't lead the soldiers of Zipangu to invade the Ming China. Even if I do, the destiny of the world will not change for a better path. I entered Dominus Association and also approached the Conquistador faction in order to cross over the seas to Zipangu at any cost. In India, I was told by Xavier that, in Zipangu, there was a young, atypical princess called Oda Nobuna. For that princess, there is no distinction between the Orient and Europe in this world and there are no differences between Europeans and her own countrymen; furthermore, there is not even a difference between a god and a human. Someday, she will grow to be a hero like Alexander the Great. I want to be employed by Oda Nobuna; in order to raise her as the queen of the Oriental Christian nation of Zipangu. Indeed, I have an even grander and nobler purpose, rather than a lofty ambition of the missionary works in Ming China or the colonial management of East Asia."*

*"... Did you also obtain that 'face' for your "great purpose?" Literally an expedient measure."*

*"It may be so. It wasn't only you who was scared upon seeing this face. There are people who appreciate it as the miracle of God and shed tears for it. It's convenient to have this special 'face.'"*

*"You also used this face to enter the hole of Otomo's heart!"*

Frois glared at Gaspard with ghastly eyes.

However, Kuroda Kanbei did not have any faith.

The reason why she daringly became a Christian was to proactively learn the unknown Namban culture such as alchemy and electromagnetism.

Therefore, she had no fear in confronting such a heretic missionary.

*“What’s with the face that isn’t supposed to exist on this earth? Isn’t this just an ordinary Namban face? Rather, doesn’t he look like a saint who emancipated himself from self-interest?”* Kanbei sat down and began to negotiate with Gaspard, feeling doubt.

*“So, Gaspard. Because the matter with Fancisco is unrelated to us, I shall put it down for now. You seem to have inspired Sorin with some strange things. Was it the establishment of a country of God? That will be a trouble! Oda Nobuna is currently surrounded by the eastern and western warlords. I have to persuade Otomo Sorin to attack Mori from behind in order to impede their advancement.”*

*“Simon-kun. I hope that you could urge Oda Nobuna to become the queen of Zipangu. Originally, I was going to give Yasakani Magatama to Oda Nobuna myself and become a military advisor of the Oda Clan. She had a personality to disregard Christianity and Namban culture as “foreign” things, along with her capacity that is not inferior to Queen Elizabeth of England; there is no other person who is qualified to be the ruler of Zipangu.”*

*“Unfortunately, Otomo Sorin-sama is a person who is equal to Oda Nobuna, but her threshold is weaker due to poor upbringing; that person has always suffered from the betrayal of her vassals and clan. She doesn’t have the mindset to reign over Zipangu. Though it’s possible for that person to fully utilize her ability for the first time by fighting jointly with Oda Nobuna,”* Gaspard still smiled serenely.

*“After Xavier passed away, Dominus Association can’t understand it anymore. The notion that this Far Eastern island Zipangu holds the fate of the world. Mankind’s history will change completely once Zipangu is united where its power as the world’s strongest military nation is kept as a Christian nation. The mixture of eastern and western cultures that happened in the past will happen again. Because Alexander the Great had gone to an adventure for conquest, he united the western Greek and eastern Persian civilizations. Only by uniting the eastern and western civilizations that the Golden Age of mankind will be achieved. There is no way we could let this country isolate itself from the outside.”*

*“What’s with this national seclusion? This man sometimes uses strange words,”* Kanbei suspected that his way of talking was as if he knew about the future.

*“So, Why, after giving Yasakani Magatama to Lion, did you return to Kyushu?”*

*“An unexpected situation occurred to me. The daughters of the previous ruler Takahisa, the Shimazu Four Sisters, had been solidified by a new order and suddenly grew in power. Those four sisters will banish the Namban and Christians who will try to involve Zipangu during the Age of Discovery from Kyushu [Originally, it was written as “great navigation era.” It sounds like the Age of Discovery when European ships sailed around the world for new lands, hence the revision of the term.]. Otomo Sorin-sama will fall now if I don’t prevent the Shimazu Clan’s northern advancement. All of the footholds of the European power in Kyushu will be burned down by Shimazu. By the time Oda Nobuna reaches Kyushu eventually, it will be too late. Frois. There is no room left for argument whether I am a heretic or do belong to the Conquistador faction anymore.”*

*“Whether you are a heretic who will support or become an enemy of Oda Nobuna, this Simon will judge you not by your words. I shall pull a tarot card,”* Kanbei put the card deck on a desk and approached Gaspard.

*“This one card, it will indicate your future! Cheating will prove nothing!”*

*“I should pull it? Then I will pick this card on the top.”*

*“I’ll say this. It’s useless to make a fake replacement of the cards. I have properly taken measures.”*

*“I understand, small strategist of Zipangu”*

Gaspard picked the card placed on top of the deck simply with one finger, turned it over, and replaced it on the deck.

Kanbei could hardly believe what she had seen through her own eyes.

*“.... It’s blank. There is no picture. How stupid. How could I mix the forgotten ‘omitted’ card inside?”*

*“It’s regrettable, but there is no one who can read my future, Simon-kun. To use tarots or astrology is impossible. It’s even impossible for Nostradamus,”* Gaspard answered.

*“Why, why? Why is there no future about you? Even the “Death” card didn’t come out. It’s impossible for such a person to exist!”*

*“It’s because I don’t live in the future that I always lived in the past. I believe that the Golden Age of humanity existed in the past and that there is no paradise in the future. In the past during antiquity, society harmonized with human spirits beautifully, and they were unified as they maintained reasonable moderation and freedom. However, a great accident befell upon them as the mythical Tower of Babel collapsed, and flood destroyed their utopia. As a result, the human race divided into innumerable races, nations, and civilizations.”*

*“That is a story from the Old Testament, right?”*

*““No. From Babylonia; Akkadian Empire [Originally written as Akkadian (not to be confused with the French Acadian), which was actually the language of Babylonia and named after the Akkadian Empire, hence the revision. Since their lands overlapped, this sentence is semantically questionable; the first two should be incorporated as Mesopotamia (EN: You may revise this, as I don't much believe in my stock knowledge).]; Greece; Aztec, Mayan, and Incan civilizations; and Formosa. I have collected about the myth of the Great Flood from various races across all parts of the world. Many myths including the Holy Bible tell historical facts in travesty as a mythology. The order of the world is thrown into haphazard by time. I can't overturn this law with any study or knowledge. There is paradise in the past, while only apocalypse prophesized in the Revelation awaits in the future.”*

*“Has Sagara Yoshiharu forgotten that the world he lived in is on the verge of collapse? Or doesn't he know it since he was born in a peaceful country by chance?”* Gaspard muttered with a sorrowful look.

*“How did you know the future? Have you passed through Amano-Iwato just like Sagara Yoshiharu? Or are you a person from the future who traveled to the past?”*

*“You can see the past and future without causing a big miracle like Amano-Iwato, at least. Such a thing can be done inside this small room covered with dust.”*

*“How? Show it to me!”*

*“Simon-san, it's dangerous!”* Frois shook Kanbei's shoulders, but Kanbei's endless curiosity had already erupted.

*“By using this Platonic solid [A Platonic solid is a polyhedron with each of the vertices formed by the same number of congruent sides. One simple example of it is the cube, whose each vertex is formed by three sides.] . It is also called the “stone molded without using hands.” It's a natural, white stone shaped like an icosahedron [Please use Google from now on since I find explaining tiresome] which is made up of a perfect equilateral triangle on every face.”*

*“Natural white stone? This is? It doesn't seem like it's processed by people.”*

*“Moreover, it's a valuable thing since there is only one of its kind in the world. Therefore, I can use it for my observational art. Little strategist of Zipangu. Take a look. The picture of the future is reflected from the depths of this stone.”*

Kanbei held her breath.

The image projected from the inside the stone after had Gaspard taken it out. It was the scene of Azuchi Castle which had been completed by Oda Nobuna wrapped and burning within crimson flames.

*“What is this, Gaspard?”*

*“What we can see is only a fragment, Simon-kun. The scene reflected from this Platonic solid comes abruptly like a flash. I have no choice but to complement the interval between the images with knowledge and reasoning. But you probably must have already known it from Sagara Yoshiharu. The future of Azuchi Castle which is the symbol of Oda Nobuna’s ambition, the Tenka Fubu, is painted in an inferno.”*

Simon knew about the future, the Fire of Honno-ji. However, if Nobuna was slain when Honno-ji was burning, then the Oda administration would disappear from this earth, and naturally, Azuchi Castle, where Oda Nobuna resided at, would be burnt during the war afterward as well.

*“It’s the same... With the future that Sagara Yoshiharu told. Gaspard seems to be able to foresee everything from the past to the future with the same conclusion that has been prophesied before. There is no doubt,”* Kanbei’s shoulders shook from learning that Oda Nobuna’s destiny is difficult to prevent.

*“If there is no one interfering in this history, Oda Nobuna will be slain soon. The Oda administration will fall, and Zipangu will not enter the Age of Discovery. There would be no one else that has physical prowess and willpower if Zipangu loses Oda Nobuna who is akin to a hero with a talent that only comes out once in a millennium. However, even being the world’s largest military power with excessive gold and silvers, once the samurais of this nation brandish their power to all directions, it will have been exhausted eventually and will enter into a saikoku [Again, just Google it]. Thus it will cut off its relationship with the Namban and Ming China except for some free regions. And thus, a long-lasting peace will be kept in this country with that. It isn’t the best method, but this is the best one they could have. Such is their fate.”*

*“Nobuna-sama will be defeated? Is that true, Simon-san?”* Frois asked.

*“Disclosing it is useless, but the future that Gaspard has talked about is almost true,”* Kanbei nodded.

*“Such a thing is. Does Yoshiharu-san know about it?”*

*“Indeed. He knows about it from the beginning. Because he knows about it that Sagara Yoshiharu continues to fight to change Oda Nobuna’s fate.”*

*I am finally aware of the deep sorrow that Sagara Yoshiharu secretly holds.*

However, that was impossible for Frois; she could only pray Sagara Yoshiharu make a different future for Oda Nobuna [The latter clause is in subjunctive mood. Definitely no grammatical error]. She grieved over her powerlessness. There was nothing she could do except to pray.

*“This power would be useless if this thing is damaged. It is valuable,”* Gaspard covered the stone with a woolen cloth.

*“It was the reason of the people of this country that Zipangu chose isolationism. But I know of the future of Zipangu and the world. As the result of Oda Nobuna’s death, the separation of the eastern and western civilizations won’t be resolved. After several hundreds of years passes, the eastern and western civilizations will clash. The Europeans will come again to Zipangu. Moreover, at that time, there is a decisive military difference. The Namban will lead an invincible ironclad fleet, not wooden ships. It is impossible to retain country isolation. Zipangu is merely stopped in its own time. But the world itself does not stop.”*

*“Foolish! Oda Nobuna is the inventor of tekkosen [ironclad ship]! But right now, it’s too heavy and can’t sail in the open seas. However, at any rate, there will be a technological innovation.”*

*“Many genius insights that Oda Nobuna sees will be buried under the darkness. The tekkosen will be forgotten several years after her death. During the European Middle Ages, when the Roman Empire collapsed, many of its ancient wisdom are sealed by the Church, thus civilization has declined. Do you know that the Dark Ages has come? Because Zipangu is not as stupid as they are, they won’t decline. But it will stagnate gradually. Relatively speaking, it’s the same as decaying.”*

*“If Oda Nobuna doesn’t die according to her destiny, then Japan will enter the Age of Discovery and become the catalyst that’ll cause the fusion of the eastern and western civilizations. Only at that time that the history of humanity will be tampered according to your decision. The world before the Great Flood. In other words, it’s only one step closer to the utopia of the past where all of mankind lived together. Is this why you want to tamper the future that you saw, letting Oda Nobuna live?”*

*“Gracias. It is the biggest reason why I’ve come to Zipangu. Simon-kun, you are very quick to turn your mind around. Your understanding is outstanding among the intellectual people of Zipangu that I’ve come across.”*

*“I’m not as good as Takenaka Hanbei,” Kanbei curtly answered.*

*“But then, you should cooperate with Sagara Yoshiharu. Doesn’t your purpose of changing Oda Nobuna’s fate match perfectly? Why are you trying to send Sagara Yoshiharu back to the future?”*

*“It probably is a story which is hard to understand by the people of Zipangu where the king has many concubines, but in Europe, purity is respected. Therefore, for Oda Nobuna who is the queen of a foreign people to be acknowledged by the world, she must officially receive a Catholic baptism and become the queen of a Christian nation, becoming a virgin queen. Like the way of Elizabeth of England. She is praised by the people as a great queen of a Christian nation and accepted. Love is taboo – before this, the people of Zipangu will not acknowledge their love*

*due to the social status difference between her and Sagara Yoshiharu. With the way things are, she will perish because of Sagara Yoshiharu who should've come to save her."*

*"Are you forcing purity to Otomo Sorin for that reason? That fellow is a person who gets lonely easily. It's impossible to live in loneliness. It's awful," Kanbei hit the desk in indignation.*

*"The situation is a little different with Sorin-sama. That person has a weak heart. Once she is blinded by a man, she will be corrupted immediately. Thus, she can't be a deputy military commander nor a close friend to Oda Nobuna. If Sagara Yoshiharu comes out and meets with her, there is a possibility that her heart will be taken by him. Therefore, I want to avoid that by all means necessary."*

*"Sagara Yoshiharu is truly a troublesome existence," Gaspard laughed.*

*"He is a special human being who originally shouldn't exist in this world. As long as the person from the future who is an uncertain factor exists in this world, my observational art and intervention are impeded. A future person like him should not have existed here; my art can't be performed accurately. In other words, I can't predict how history is being tampered by his actions. Furthermore, the worst thing is that Sagara Yoshiharu has fallen in love with Oda Nobuna. This love will eventually ruin Oda Nobuna. The fate, even if the route has been changed, it will be carried by the people to its destination."*

*"No. It's only your own opinion, Gaspard. Sagara Yoshiharu doesn't think like that. Sagara Yoshiharu believes that fate can be changed."*

*"That is simply his own desire. To change fate, to overturn numerical inferiority from a cornered state of checkmate like in chess and shogi, a theoretical decision is necessary. Only I who know of the future can accomplish that with calm actions. That boy prioritizes lives and emotions. That action has neither interest nor reason. It's the most difficult uncertain element for me. Before Oda Nobuna was ruined, I had tried to send Sagara Yoshiharu back to future."*

*"I don't understand it. Why not just send an assassin to kill Sagara Yoshiharu directly? Why are you carefully keeping him alive?"*

*"He is a very troublesome existence. That is because there is a flaw in my observational skills. To a person from the future who originally shouldn't exist in this world, if I were to interfere with it myself through means with maximum intensity like murder, then both his and this world's fate would overlap completely and the precision of my observational art would deviate eternally. It would be impossible to predict the future. So, I tried to return him to the future. I was going to return it to the original world which is 'the world where there is no Sagara Yoshiharu.' When he lost his memories about the Oda Clan, the person that blocked my observational skill disappeared. I was relieved... But his vitality and willpower, they seem to take pride in their obstinacy, which is hard to believe."*

Kanbei laughed through her small nose, “Mufuu,” and stuck out her chest.

*“I am relieved to hear that, Gaspard. You can only use the power of the three regalia once. There isn’t any power left in the sacred treasures. Amano-Iwato can’t be opened twice.”*

*“Ah. That kind of surprising magic can only be used once. Therefore, I am using these ten sacred treasures this time.”*

*“The spear that Chosokabe used. As expected, it was all because of you.”*

*“Kobayawaka is a careful and wise person. I took the effort so that I won’t be suspected as the culprit, letting KobayawakaTakakage obtain it through the Murakami Navy. In her heart, she doesn’t want to kill Sagara Yoshiharu, but it has become a dilemma in her heart; she was worried about preventing the alliance of the Oda and Otomo Clans. There were very few options. I took over that advantage. Perhaps she wouldn’t notice that I am operating in the back yet.”*

*“It’s all according to your calculation.”*

*“If Sagara Yoshiharu meets Sorin-sama, then Sorin-sama’s fate will also be twisted by him. I might lose to Sagara Yoshiharu. I thoroughly believe with my knowledge and faith that the queen of Zipangu must be a virgin queen. But Sagara Yoshiharu gives love to the princess generals as a man, all without thinking about the consequences. That is a strong weapon for young girls. Therefore, I put him in an ‘accident.’ But I did not let Sagara Yoshiharu have an ‘accidental death’ because it ipso facto has the same effect as killing him. Therefore...”*

*“His accident isn’t simply to prevent him to enter and disturb Bungo.”*

*“... That’s correct, Simon-kun. My intention of exploiting that accident is to lead him to a point where I will make ‘Sagara Yoshiharu isn’t born from the beginning.’ Eventually, he will disappear from the earth. Both the present and the future. Because, in the first place, he isn’t born. If I use this method, then Sagara Yoshiharu would no longer have any influence to this world, and my observational art wouldn’t deviate.”*

*“From the start? To have never been born? What on earth is that kind of reasoning? Surely... By eliminating Sagara Yoshiharu’s ancestor and exterminating his blood lineage?”*

*“The fate that ‘Sagara Yoshiharu will be born’ can’t be undone. Fate is something like a probability: even if I change the course of fate that has advanced greatly and alter it temporarily, it would arrive to the original end of its destiny. Even if I significantly tamper it so many times, after hundreds of year, it would yield the same result. For example, by letting Imagawa Yoshimoto alive, it doesn’t mean that the descendants of Imagawa’s family tree will deviate from its order. On the contrary, I can’t kill Sagara Yoshiharu even if I killed the people who would be Sagara Yoshiharu’s ancestors one after another. The people are born with strong*

*fate. Even if it's interfered at some point, the world will take a long time to finally balance it."*

[Mushoku Tensei content – 98%]

*"So, how exactly are you going to erase him?"*

*"That is, to 'erase' the 'fate that Sagara Yoshiharu will born.' You should let another fate that shouldn't have crossed in theory collide with this fate. By the fact that a contradiction that shouldn't have happened is caused, then Sagara Yoshiharu's existence would disappear. The memories about Sagara Yoshiharu will disappear from your and Oda Nobuna's minds. The world that has been tampered by him will change to 'a world where there is no Sagara Yoshiharu.' In the place where Sagara Yoshiharu does not exist, I shall become the strategist of Oda Nobuna in this world."*

*"Gaspard, who on earth exactly are you?" Kanbei dropped the tarot cards she held in her hands to the floor.*

*"Simon-san! You two have talked too much! Your heart is already being robbed by his words too. He trickles you with curiosity and gradually draws it deeper into the depths."*

*"That said, Frois. I just can't ignore it and let Sagara Yoshiharu disappear."*

*"Simon-san. Perhaps Gaspard-sama wants to lead Nobuna-sama's armies in Zipangu and intends to cause a great war with the paganistic country Ottoman Empire in the name of God! A literal Crusade war! In the European chronicles, there is a true king named Prester John who leads a powerful Christian country in the Orient; there will be a legendary savior in the east to fight the pagans with the European lords soon. One of the reasons the Age of Discovery arrived in Europe was to sail the oceans and search for this Prester John. Although it has been acknowledged that such a king does not exist, Gaspard-sama wants to train Nobuna-sama to become Prester John and make the legend real."*

*"Prester John? Oda Nobuna will become a Christian and convert Japan into a Christian country to make the legend come true?"*

*"If it comes true, Zipangu will cooperate with the European lords and make an unprecedented world war against the Ottoman Empire in a pincer attack from the east and west. By causing a great war, the east-west merging scheme will be fulfilled by forcibly making the European and Ottoman cultures conflate; that is, to incorporating both Islamic and Christian countries together."*

*"It doesn't say that much there. Frois is too afraid of me. Perhaps you might see me as a demon. But when I have learnt of the future, I know that my actions are right. Humans' war weapons evolve remarkably, but religious wars will not end in the future four hundred years later. Rather, religion rivalries will intensify further. The chance is only now when Oda Nobuna has appeared in Zipangu, through which human errors can be corrected."*

*“I continue praying that Yoshiharu-san will take out Nobuna-sama to the oceans, but I should never think of dragging Nobuna-sama into a bottomless religious war,” Frois desperately preached hard.*

*“The reason why Nobuna-sama wants to go out to the oceans is to sail for adventures around the world that have not been seen yet and to establish oceanic trade! It is not about becoming a colony to join the Spanish, Portuguese, and Crusade expeditions to attack the pagans with military power! In the first place, Nobuna-sama is a person who has divided both religion and military power way ahead than the Europeans. You must not drag her to join the Crusade of the past.”*

Kanbei began to think that Gaspard wasn't just some simple prophet; he behaved as if he had foreseen the future that the Platonic solid showed...

*“Frois, right now, Sagara Yoshiharu's safety is more important. Since Simon still remembers his name, it means that he still hasn't gone extinct yet.”*

*“It would be an extraordinary story to make Oda Nobuna and Ottoman Empire fight each other. Zipangu still doesn't have a powerful naval force,” Gaspard calmly giggled.*

*“If a Christian country suddenly appears in the Far East with a powerful armament, then it would be inevitable for Nobuna-sama to lead a powerful fleet to cross the sea! The samurais of Japan put serious traditional emphasis for supreme armies while neglecting naval power, Nobuna-sama is an exception. There are merchants and pirates who descended from the lineage of the Wako pirates of Zipangu that started a southern sea trade. If she organizes it, it wouldn't be impossible to form a powerful navy.”*

*“Let's make a bet, Frois and Simon-kun. My 2<sup>nd</sup> challenge to remove Sagara Yoshiharu's interference, leaving only one result. If Sagara Yoshiharu disappears, would you join me in the struggle to prevent Oda Nobuna's death? But if Sagara Yoshiharu survives again and arrives in front of me and Otomo Sorin-sama, then I will admit complete defeat and vow to join Sagara Yoshiharu's will. But that would be an impossible thing.”*

## Chapter 4

### The Four Sisters of Shimazu

#### Part 1

Post-Battle of Kizakihara – the condition of sparing the lord of the Southern Higo Province—Sagara Yoshihi— was the head of Sagara Yoshiharu.

It was the decision of Shimazu Yoshihiro.

But just as Shimazu Yoshihiro was on the verge of slashing his neck, Sagara Yoshihi prevented her.

*“If you kill Yoshiharu, I will commit suicide! Once I do, the Sagara Clan will be handed down to Uncle Soun.”*

Sagara Yoshihi wished to sacrifice herself in order to prove Yoshiharu’s innocence. Shimazu Yoshihiro had no objection until this point.

However, if Kai Soun attained the southern Higo along with the Sagara Clan, then it would be a grave consequence for the Shimazu Clan.

The Aso Clan at the Northern Higo barely kept its independence as a small daimyo by forming alliances with the Sagara Clan. Even if they had the service of the undefeated Shura, Kai Soun, it would still be impossible for them to expand their territory. It was all because their national power was too weak to support a long expedition and continuous war.

However, if Kai Soun managed to annex the territory of the Sagara Clan, it would be a different story. Before entering a decisive battle against Otomo Sorin, the Shimazu Clan must face the Higo Province which was under the jurisdiction of Kai Soun. He was not an enemy who could be easily defeated.

*“What is this, Sagara Yoshihi? Are you trying to deceive me?”*

*“Do you know that uncle and I have exchanged a written oath at the Shinto shrine with each other?”*

*“The oath of war renunciation?”*

*“Uncle firmly believes in the written oath that we’ve exchanged with one another. However I have made another oath without uncle’s permission as a ‘testament’ hidden inside the*

*shrines of Yatsushiro. If I do not take a husband and die before giving birth to an heir, then my younger sister Tokuchiyo shall take up the position as the head of the clan nominally, while entrusting the real authority to Uncle Soun. If Tokuchiyo also dies without leaving an heir, then Uncle Soun shall become the next head of the Sagara Clan."*

*"That's a lie! You want to hand out the entire household of the Sagara Clan to the prime minister of a neighboring country? Even if you hold antipathy against your family, this is too ridiculous!"* Shimazu Yoshihiro was confused.

But Sagara Yoshihi smiled, *"It's true. For me, Uncle Soun is a comrade that I can trust more than anyone else."*

*"If you kill Yoshiharu then I will die. The Shimazu Clan will then need to fight against the unified Higo after Uncle Soun annexes the Sagara Clan. Uncle Soun will not stop attacking until Shimazu has been defeated."*

Shimazu Yoshihiro was not a general who feared a decisive battle against Kai Soun. Rather, she wished to break Kai Soun's undefeated war record and give him the taste of defeat. Yoshihiro who had achieved *Tsuri no Buse* at Kizakihara felt that way.

However, this was a matter related to the policy of the entire Shimazu Clan.

The head of the Shimazu Clan was the eldest sister Shimazu Yoshihsa; the 2<sup>nd</sup> sister Yoshihiro assisted Yoshihsa as a warrior. She couldn't make the decision to fight Kai Soun by her own will.

*"... Now that it has come to this, it is no longer something that I can decide on my own. Although time is precious, I can't help but to summon the Shimazu Four Sisters [including her] to convene and decide your treatment with my sisters. The meeting will continue until all the members' opinions match. Once the decision is made, no one will be able to overturn it. You two shall attend this meeting, and, depending on the decision made, I might take your neck on the spot."*

That was Sagara Yoshihi. She had neatly made a plan for survival. She was not a fool who would face against the Shimazu Clan without thinking. Shimazu Yoshihiro said to her page, *"Take these two people to Satsuma. Escort them to the castle."*

*"But Sagara Yoshihi. What kind of relationship do you have with Sagara Yoshiharu who is a messenger of the Oda Clan? You and the Oda Clan shouldn't have any relationship at all. So why did you try to protect this man?"*

*"I just met him yesterday. He got shipwrecked and drifted to Yatsushiro Port."*

*“... Then isn't he just an unrelated man? If you just abandon him, you will survive. If you die protecting him then the lineage of the Sagara Clan will perish. I do not understand why you are doing this.”*

*“Even if the lineage of the Sagara Clan would perish, I do not care in the least. But perhaps the reason is love, hahahaha.”*

Shimazu Yoshihiro immediately blushed.

Shimazu Yoshihiro was a straight-laced princess general who devoted herself only on strengthening her martial arts. Just by hearing the word “love” would immediately make her excited.

*“W-W-W-What? L-L-L-Love, you say? Did you get influenced by the rumor of the opening of Amano-Iwato? Y-Y-You insolent bastard!”*

*“Hmph. It's just a joke. What are you getting so flustered for?”*

As expected from the Valkyrie who represented “War” of the Shimazu Clan. Yoshihiro who lived solely for war did not have any immunity towards that kind of things.

She showed a shaken expression which she had never displayed during battles.

*“Sagara Yoshiharu of the Oda Clan. I shall leave the decision for your judgment to my Anesha. I have a premonition that if you, the rumored ‘world's number one womanizer’ comes to ours, the Shimazu Clan, you would cause a disturbance to the public moral, and our clan's power would decline rapidly.”*

After riding her horse and walking away, Yoshihiro blushed and murmured, *“Choosing a man that she had just met yesterday over her own clan... I don't understand.”*

Yoshiharu who had been saved from decapitation by a hair's breadth felt admiration towards Yoshihi.

*“To make a survival plan by taking advantage of the written oath made with Soun, huh? Does Soun even know about it? Such a bold thing to do.”*

*“Fufu. This is what survival is all about. Sagara Yoshiharu, your performance in front of Shimazu Yoshihiro is brave, very brave indeed. Shimazu Yoshihiro is a Shura who wouldn't hesitate to kill you. In fact, not killing you is being discourteous. This is Kyushu; no matter how much lifespan you have, it won't be enough.”*

*“It's normal for me. Although, it may appear a bit disordered. If I make you a scapegoat here to run away and survive, I'd have no right to call myself a man, even if I live a long life. I have promised Soun before that I would ensure your life even if it would take my own.”*

*“Let me say thank you. However, as Oda Nobuna’s lover, won’t you rather come back to her side and live? Fufu.”*

*“If I were to be caught, then I would find any opportunities to return to Nobuna’s side. But what will happen to us and the 500 Sagara soldiers now?”*

*“Each of the Four Sisters of Shimazu has different characteristics and ideas respectively. Furthermore, the meeting will not reach a conclusion until all the four sisters agree on one opinion. Therefore, even if I can’t judge what will happen, the life of our 500 soldiers would at least be alright. Indeed, the Shimazu Clan is not that ruthless to kill all of its prisoners. In addition, they should avoid having to execute me since it will only serve to double Uncle Soun’s military power. Unlike Shimazu Yoshihiro whose body is completely consisted of ‘war,’ Shimazu Yoshihisa is not a princess general who is devoted to military arts. However, you should be wary of the schemes made by the 3<sup>rd</sup> sister Shimazu Toshihisa.”*

*“Do we have no choice but to wait for the outcome of the Four Sisters’ conference while being tied up? Though as prisoners, we might not be able to speak so often; let’s use any opportunity to ensure our survival effectively.”*

*“Yes. But in Kyushu, the thought of ‘saving the life of others in the expense of another’ is useless. Therefore, we should think of another way for the two of us to survive, Yoshiharu.”*

*“I see. We would better not have some sweet dreams about having all of us come back to Higo without compensation. So what should we do to achieve a compromise?”*

*“As you have already understood it, Shimazu Yoshihiro is a person who follows the way of righteousness and the militaristic way of a warlord. She will never move out of her own self-interest. If we wish to achieve a breakthrough in our problems, we must persuade the one who coordinates their interests, Shimazu Toshihisa; or the eldest sister who shoulders the responsibility of ensuring the continuation of the clan—Shimazu Yoshihisa.”*

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### The Shimazu’s Uchi Castle – Inner City

Located at the hill of the modern Kagoshima. It was made to serve as an important vantage point where one could have a bird’s eye view of Sakurajima, where the military of the Shimazu Clan was located. There was no large luxurious structure to be seen at all. It was a rustic and boorish base citadel used for fortification.

The soldiers in the castle were in delight after hearing the victory report from Shimazu Yoshihiro.

At the Battle of Kizakihara, they had finally completely annihilated their arch nemesis—the Ito Clan.

Furthermore, they managed to capture Sagara Yoshihi!

But the messenger from the Oda Clan—Sagara Yoshiharu—had somehow slipped into the Sagara army for some unknown reason; the situation had developed into an unexpected and serious diplomatic issue.

Another problem was that Sagara Yoshihi was protecting Yoshiharu. If Yoshiharu were to be beheaded, Yoshihi would commit suicide and Higo should be handed to Kai Soun.

The Shimazu Clan aimed for the long-cherished wish of the tripartite unification by conquering Hyuga in order to invade the *Kingdom of God* established by Otomo Sorin. Or would they be forced to face the revenge-ridden demon Kai Soun at Higo after losing his sworn ally Yoshihi? For the sake of reaching a decision, the Shimazu Four Sisters gathered at the reception hall inside Uchi Castle.

*“So what should we do now? Ordering the leader Sagara Yoshihi to commit seppuku or to execute the strategist Sagara Yoshiharu? The Oda Clan who rules the world at the center of Kyoto or the issue with Kai Soun, which one is the most important problem to face in the future for the Shimazu Clan? I see. I wonder what Xiang Yu-san would do at this situation. As expected, should we bury all the prisoners alive? Burying them alive. is it?”*

*“Wickedness is my mentor,”* the one who had taken this as her favorite phrase was the eldest sister of the Shimazu Clan—Shimazu Yoshihisa. [Ooh, a chuunibyou like Bontenmarou?]

Even though she was born in the aggressive Shimazu Clan, she was not well-versed in terms of military actions and had a habit of staying indoors, not leaving Satsuma even by one step. In retrospect, however, she had a mysterious virtue that charmed people and made them feel relieved; for such she was dearly loved by her sisters and retainers.

However, even if she was regarded as one of the few good-natured leaders in the countries of Shuras, due to her little bit of honesty, Yoshihisa decorated her room with the portraits of all the wicked figures in history and worshiped them every day.

*“If it’s Ukita Naoie-san, would he use poison or shoot that person to death?”*

*“Lord Xiang Yu would naturally bury the prisoners alive or set their town to fire.”*

*“If it’s Lord Ashikaga Takauji, he would spare no negotiations and proceed to divide Yamato Goshou into halves, drive Japan into a civil war, and steal the three sacred treasures.”*

*“Hisahide Matsunaga would blow them up with a blast of gunpowder hidden inside a teapot.”*

Numerous wicked schemes circulated inside her head.

But even so, these plans were seldom put into practice

Because her younger sister Yoshihiro had always prevented her from doing so.

It was the same for this meeting.

*“So it has started. Please wait. You can’t bury the prisoners, Anesha!”*

The second sister who had already met Yoshiharu at Kizakihara—Shimazu Yoshihiro.

Revered as the Valkyrie and a righteous princess general. She supported her elder sister Yoshihisa as her aide-de-camp in military affairs. But even though she was harsh and severe to her enemies, she was awfully weak to her elder sister.

After she had arrived at Uchi Castle, Yoshihiro was still being wary against Yoshiharu who claimed himself as “The Man from the Future” as usual. Though she was not afraid of Kai Soun who was similarly a Shura as she was, she stated that there was no telling what kind of mess the man from the future would bring to them.

*“Eh. Is it no good? Yoshihiro-chan?”*

*“Haa. It’s been decided then. Anesha’s virtue has been lost. Even though we are in a country of Shura, subjugating the enemies on the battlefield in a dignified manner and exterminating the surrendering captive are different matters. Though it’d be another matter entirely if it were a rebellion.”*

*“As for me, I want to be lined up as one of the wicked people of this world; I want to be feared by the Shuras of Kyushu.”*

*“How could you abandon the virtue of being a benevolent person? Leave the matter of being feared by the Shuras to me.”*

*“About that, Yoshihiro-chan. You can’t be forced with the role of being the villain forever. You are already renowned as the Valkyrie. According to Toshihisa-chan’s investigation, a militaristic princess general would be feared by many men; as such, it will be impossible for me to arrange a wedding ceremony for you. How could you ever hope to find a soul mate if you only focus yourself to war? A flower’s life is short. You will miss your marriageable age, Yoshihiro-chan.”*

*“M-M-M-My chance for marriage is not important now! I simply think that it would be best for us to cut Sagara Yoshiharu here and break any diplomatic relationship with the Oda*

*Clan. This man who insists that he came from the future has been interfering in Japan's history too much. There is no telling what kind of trouble he would bring to the future of Satsuma."*

*"But if Yoshihiro-chan can't find a husband, then I am sorry for I cannot take a groom as well."*

*"Because Anesha is the head of the Shimazu Clan, you must give birth to an heir as soon as possible. But things like love which is a trend lately are worthless. Love makes a Shura weak! The number of princess generals in our Shimazu Clan who have been talking about love has increased. Iehisa is a prime example. It is all because of Sagara Yoshiharu's nonsense future talks about love that has been spreading around."*

*"But a marriage without love is lacking. Though I love Yoshihiro-chan... It would be nice if you were a man."*

*"There is no marriage between two sisters in this world!"*

*"At least if Yoshihiro-chan is my otouto. Then I would be able to have 2 babies."*

*"There is no marriage between an elder sister and her younger brother either!"*

*"Please wait, Yoshihiro-nee. The task of handling Sagara Yoshiharu and severing ties with the Oda Clan must be handled carefully. Also, if you kill this man, Sagara Yoshihi would commit suicide. Then Kai Soun shall obtain the military of all parts of Higo due to the exchanged written oath with Sagara Yoshihi. After that, he will proceed to attack the Shimazu Clan. But now that the Ito Clan has been defeated, our enemy now is Otomo Sorin. Even if they do not do anything for now, we still need to be prepared for Otomo Sorin who is aiming for Hyuga. I will think of a method."*

The 3<sup>rd</sup> daughter, Shimazu Toshihisa, served in diplomacy as an intelligent strategist.

Called as the head advisor of the clan, she acted as the "brain" of the clan and supported them behind the scenes.

An excellent sister who was the head of clan and managed to gather the loyalty of their vassals with her virtue of benevolence.

The Takegami whose bravery had spread all over Kyushu.

The young prodigy of combat strategies.

While the other three sisters were very brilliant, Toshihisa's presence as the supporter from the shadow was awfully weak in comparison.

With her aquiline nose, beautiful eyebrows and pupils, her facial feature strongly equaled Yoshihisa's and the other sisters' who were worthy to be called as "The Beauties of Satsuma." However, her thin appearance was more suitable to be described as that of a princess of Kyoto.

But, Toshihisa possessed a flat chest that made people wonder if she was a daughter of the Shimazu Clan.

Yoshihisa and Yoshihiro inherited the constitution of the Shimazu Clan's previous princesses who had had big breasts. Their hips were also good enough to give them an easy delivery during childbirth.

The same could be said for the youngest sister Iehisa. Although her body was still delicate, but her breasts had been developing earlier than the norm. [Oppai loli of the Hestia faction!]

However, only Toshihisa retained her body which looked like a little girl's.

Therefore, in the family, there were some gossips about Toshihisa, "*With a weak presence and flat chest, her happiness will be low too,*" "*With small hips like that, she would have a lot of trouble giving birth to a child, how pitiful,*" spreading around. [This note has been deleted to avoid a war between the Plot and Justice factions]

*"However, this ugly man Sagara Yoshiharu really looks like a monkey. Oda Nobuna must be a dull woman to be fascinated by a boring man like him. If she ever attacks Kyushu, I will make her a quarry for our Tanegashimas using Tsuru no Buse. Oda Nobuna must have been working hard to produce a baby with Sagara Yoshiharu, right? In that case, he is not a virgin anymore, right? If that is the case then there wouldn't be any regret if he dies now. But of course, I'm not saying this because I envy Oda Nobuna for having a man."*

Because people around her kept saying things like "*Flat, Flat, Flat,*" for too many times innumerable, Toshihisa's speech behavior was the wickedest and most abusive among the four sisters. [This note has also been deleted under the assumption that it would be used as the casus belli for the aforementioned war.]

Yoshihisa and Yoshihiro said, "*Because Toshihisa-chan chest is so flat, she is so, severely strict towards men,*" "*Yes, indeed. A man's preferences and his military affairs are a different matter to each other. But you wouldn't be able to find a groom with that wicked tongue of yours, Toshihisa,*" as they looked at each other.

*"Don't bring out a topic about breasts! Men must be stupid for being attracted to nee-sama's huge breasts which are similar to Sakurajima daikons* [Imagine a massively enlarged garlic bulb of a watermelon's size!]" Toshihisa's face twitched, and she roared loudly.

*"Aah. Sagara-san, what are you doing in a place like this? Have you become Sagara Yoshihi's vassal? What happened to Oda Nobuna?"*

The youngest daughter Shimazu Iehisa, who had arrived late, rushed into the room. She was in charge of military tactics and known as “The Bullet of Shimazu.”

Though she was still young, she was in fact a prodigy of tactics.

Even though Yoshihiro was the one who volunteered for the dangerous mission of fighting the 3,000 Ito soldiers with only 300 troops at Kizakihara, it was Iehisa who had devised the suicidal, deadly tactic *Tsuri no Buze*.

Iehisa grew up receiving pristine education of using Tanegashimas instead of spending her time playing with toys. She was supposed to grow to become a battle maniac whose mind was filled with things about how to win a battle. However, as she reached adolescence, she began to yearn for love.

However, there was no one whom she could fall in love with at Satsuma.

*“It is too early for you to be in love with someone,”* Yoshihiro steadfastly said those words to her with strong eyes.

Yoshihiro always took care of Toshihisa with her wicked tongue so that she could find a husband as soon as possible, but she forbade Iehisa because she was still too young.

She was a lovely youngest imouto. It would be a terrible thing if the young Iehisa eloped with a terrible partner.

Iehisa made an excuse of participating in a pilgrimage to Ise Shrine so that she could go to Kyoto to witness the stage play of the literature *Tale of Genji*. At that time, she received a welcome from Yoshiharu by Nobuna’s order.

Today, Iehisa grabbed the scruff of Yoshiharu’s neck and only said, *“I’m ashamed.”*

*“We do have reunited in a strange place now. I originally had been going to Bungo by ship to visit Otomo Sorin as a messenger but various things happened and I’ve got drifted to Yoshihi’s place.”*

*“Were you got caught by the Tsuri no Buse trap? Sagara is an idiot! Since you have knowledge from the future, you should be able to see through this Shimazu’s new tactic.”*

*“I did see through it. But your sister’s strength is too abnormal. My future knowledge was useless. Although I know that she is strong, I didn’t expect her to be stronger in real life.”*

*“Fufufu,”* Iehisa delightfully laughed through her nose.

*“I see. As expected from Yoshihiro-nee. Since you have been captured, you should surrender and become our clan’s vassal, Sagara”*

*“Me? A vassal? Yours?”*

*“Yes. This is Kyushu. Whether it is Sagara Yoshihi or someone else. If you were to use tricks on us, your head will be beheaded immediately, Sagara. I was under your care back then at Kyoto. Now, it’s my time to help you in return.”*

*“Wait a moment, Iehisa,” Yoshihiro glared at her.*

*“That’s wrong. This person is a womanizer who laid his hands on Oda Nobuna who rules the world. You are still young; it’s dangerous for you to take this person as a subordinate. Too dangerous. He should be executed immediately.”*

*“Then Yoshihiro-nee. Why don’t I take Sagara as my husband. Wouldn’t that be alright?”*

*“H-H-Husband??”*

*“Yes. If we take Sagara as my husband then he will become a part of our family, then there will be no complaints anymore, right?”*

*“What nonsense! Sagara Yoshiharu! You dared to bare your fangs to Iehisa when she visited Kyoto? Iehisa was supposed to be on a pilgrimage to Ise Shrine. Forget the things about Kai Soun, you need to die now!”*

*[Weee! To the Planet of As Usual!]*

*“Wait, it’s a misunderstanding!”*

*“So as to say, Sagara Yoshiharu is a big villain who resorts to underhanded methods and can’t help himself but to commit numerous atrocities. It seems that the morality of a person who came from the future is different,” Yoshihisa laughed, hitting her knees.*

*“As for me, I have many wicked people as my mentors and my role models.”*

*“What are you saying, Anesha? This person is a senior statesman of the Oda Clan and Sagara Yoshihi’s strategist! Any prisoner who loses to Shimazu would rebel! Could you please be more serious in handling this matter? In other words, a commander of a defeated army should be beheaded!”*

Toshihisa also said, *“Because she spent her time at Kyoto that things have become like this.”* She hopelessly said so with a sullen face.

*“Iehisa, you are still foolish. Wake up. This person is a vulgar monkey who was drowned by Oda Nobuna’s body. He will definitely have an affair because he is unsatisfied with your body which is still but a child’s!”*

*“Nyaa nyaa! Sagara still hasn’t been tied together with Oda Nobuna yet.”*

*“Do not lie! All men are like monkeys. There is no exception.”*

*“But-”*

*“Iehisa! The Tsuru no Buse that you have devised has a fatal flaw that will risk the army to total extermination once the enemy detects the ambush unit you’ve prepared beforehand. The only reason why it succeeded was because I had spread false information within the enemy beforehand when they advanced.”*

The naïve Iehisa couldn’t defend herself against Toshihisa’s wicked tongue. Her body shook and she couldn’t answer back when she was scolded by Toshihisa.

The longtime rival of Shimazu, the Ito Clan, was finally defeated by Iehisa’s tactic. She expected that she would be praised by Toshihisa. Because her hope was so big that the dejection she’d received was a lot more painful.

*“... Y-Yes...”*

Iehisa looked down with large beads of tears on her eyes.

Yoshiharu had never seen this side of Iehisa before at Kyoto; it was unimaginable. Iehisa looked like a younger sister whom was loved by her elder sisters very much.

Yoshiharu momentarily forgot his position as a captive of the Shimazu Clan and involuntarily talked to Toshihisa.

*“Even if you are her elder sister, aren’t you going too far? After all, the biggest contributor of this battle was Iehisa. It’s true that the Tsuru no Buse is a very suicidal tactic, but it takes a genius to be able to pull it off, and she succeeded in it. You should praise Iehisa more!”*

*“Wha-Wha-What is this monkey saying? A prisoner of war does not have the right to meddle in the Shimazu Clan’s affairs! It is because a suspicious person like you served as an impromptu schemer for Sagara Yoshihi that we were able to win. And it was Yoshihiro-nee that led the 300 Shimazu army. Iehisa did not fight at all.”*

*“I was supposed to lead the army as the commander but Yoshihiro-nee didn’t allow it,”* Iehisa said in a tearful voice. Iehisa couldn’t look at Toshihisa in the eyes and was looking down, trembling.

Yoshihiro, with her personality, did not seem to know how to dispel the awkward atmosphere between the two sisters and coughed lightly.

*“It is because I’ve judged that it’d be dangerous for you to serve as the decoy against an enemy 10 times your own that I didn’t entrust you this battle, Iehisa.”*

*“Well, now, now, everybody. Because it’s a celebration for our great victory, let’s be nice to each other.”*

Yoshihisa clapped her hands, then a series of banquet arrived.

*“Anesha, please hold the victory celebration after we’ve dealt with these two people of the Sagara Clan.”*

Seeing how Yoshiharu was desperately concerned for Iehisa who was an enemy general, Yoshihi puffed her cheeks.

*“Hey. You couldn’t possibly accept being Iehisa’s husband, right, Yoshiharu? She is still a child.”*

*“If I were to pretend with this role then Nobuna would definitely send out an assault force to attack Kyushu. But if this would allow Yoshihi to survive then I could only accept it.”*

*“What? You want to do it with a young girl? Do you have a fetish for young girls? Is this that so-called disease from the future called “lolicon?” You traitor, you are even more savage than a demon!”* [Seriously, how did this lexicon arrive in this period? Look at how fast it spread, to the extent of reaching Kyushu in a short length of time!]

Yoshihi flew into rage for some reason and sent a kick to Yoshiharu’s solar plexus.

Seeing Yoshiharu faint in agony, an idea suddenly flashed through Toshihisa’s mind.

*“The monkey’s wedding... That’s right! Please hear me, sisters. The one whom we should focus on more is Otomo Sorin who has the strongest military power among our current enemies. Therefore, it would be troublesome if Kai Soun were to gain the Sagara Clan’s territory. So we should never give him an excuse to do so. Because if Kai Soun’s military power were to be doubled then it would become an army that could compete against Otomo Sorin’s. The key is whom should we place more priority above all else. Conversely, Kai Soun would only have Northern Higo if we were able to gain the Sagara Clan’s territory for our own.”*

When Toshihisa began to explain her plan, Iehisa fell silent. She thought that if she were to interject, then she would be scolded again; her body seemed to remember that experience.

*“Toshihisa-chan, you want to make Sagara Yoshihi submit and become our clan’s subordinate? But what should we do with Sagara Yoshiharu?”*

*“It’s too lenient to spare both of them. That is not how a Shura of Kyushu would act, Toshihisa. If I don’t take one of their necks, I would not be able to face the men who’ve sacrificed themselves heroically at Kizakihara.”*

*“Did you forget? I will die too if Yoshiharu were to be killed. If you spare Yoshiharu’s life then I would become your clan’s subordinate.”*

Yoshihi reminded Toshihisa of that fact. *“Hmph, still the same old, dirty vixen,”* Toshihisa glared at her.

*“If it were the villainess Matsunaga Danjo, she would definitely betray the Shimazu Clan after swearing to become our vassal,”* Yoshihisa waved her fan.

*“What right does a prisoner of war have to say anything?”* Yoshihiro said sharply.

*“Nee-sama. Recall the content of the oath written by this woman. It does not matter whether Sagara Yoshihi will betray Shimazu in the future; it is fine as long as we make the agreement of handing over the Sagara Clan’s domain to Kai Soun invalid.”*

*“What?”*

*“What do you mean, Toshihisa?”*

*“Fufufu. It’s proof that a woman whose all of her nourishment only goes to her chest is no good. First of all, we’ll spare Sagara Yoshihi and make her our subordinate, and then we can station our troops in the Sagara Clan’s territory and control it effectively. Now the problem is the oath; the condition for it to happen is that she also must not have any husband to leave an heir once she dies. Therefore we just need to pick a husband for Sagara Yoshihi by ourselves.”*

*“It’s a wonderful and very wicked plan, Toshihisa-chan! Certainly you must have a deep resentment for not being able to find a marriage partner until today.”*

*“Yoshihisa-nee, stop saying such things to me! It’s only because I haven’t been able to find a suitable man at Osumi or Satsuma!”*

*“It’s amazing, Toshihisa-chan. If Sagara Yoshihi plans to betray the Shimazu Clan after giving her a marriage ceremony, we could poison her or force her to commit suicide.”*

*“Is that so? By then, the oath will be invalid! And then Kai Soun will have no justification to merge the Sagara Clan’s domain anymore.”*

*“Yes. That’s right, Yoshihiro-nee. If we make Sagara Yoshihi our subordinate by giving her a marriage ceremony, the 500 Sagara troops and two Sagara lives will be spared. If they refuse then we’ll just force them to commit suicide rather than behead them ourselves. With this, we can delay unnecessary confrontations with Kai Soun. Sagara Yoshihi can’t refuse this because if she does then Sagara Yoshiharu’s neck will fly. Look, Sagara Yoshihi’s face has become blue.”*

Yoshihi bit her lip and tremble.

*“Are you kidding? I will never take a strange man whom I never know about as my husband! Shimazu Toshihisa! You truly are a demon! Aren’t you still a virgin as well? If you use*

*this devilish scheme to ruin a maiden's feeling, you will be condemned to be single for the rest of your life!"*

*"Shut up!"*

*"I absolutely will not accept this marriage! I don't have any intention to raise a family. And to think that I will be tied together with a man from the Shimazu Clan... It makes me shudder from just thinking about it!"*

*"Yes, yes, Sagara Yoshihi. I know that you refuse to find a husband and detest your family. I suppose it's the most humiliating thing for you to be taken as a prisoner and forced to marry a man from the Shimazu Clan thereafter."*

*"Then you do know it!"*

*"In that case, the one selected as your marriage partner is Sagara Yoshiharu!"*

At the same time Yoshihi raised her voice, "Eh," Iehisa's face twitched.

*"Me and Yoshiharu? Why?"*

*"Hmph. Wouldn't this be a benefit to both of you? Although this monkey is not equal to you who is a daimyo from Kyushu, as long as you both have the same family name then it won't be a problem. Even though I don't know what's so good about this monkey, you wish to protect him. Because we like to focus our effort on Otomo Sorin, we do not wish to fight against Kai Soun now. Don't you understand it?"*

*"It's no good, Yoshihi. If you agree, the oath will be invalid. After that, we may be forced to commit suicide," Yoshiharu interjected.*

But Yoshihi said, "... No, I know it. If you do not survive then there'll be no future." She finally lowered her head and consented to submit under this condition.

*"Yoshihi, will that be alright? Your oath will be invalid, you know!"*

*"I am sorry, Yoshiharu. Because it is useless, it's better to be killed now than later. When it comes to making a countermeasure against a scheme, Shimazu Toshihisa is far better than me. Yoshihiro is far more overwhelming than me when it comes to leading an army and Iehisa's tactics are first-class. It's just like what you've said before; I have been thoroughly defeated. If I only need to face one of the Shimazu Sisters instead of all four of them, then I might have a chance to win."*

*"Well. Sagara Yoshihi, what about me? Isn't there something about me, the eldest daughter Yoshihisa whom you've lost against? I am the clan head after all."*

*"Ah well, Shimazu Yoshihisa. You have bigger breasts than mine."*

*“ONLY THAT?!”*

Yoshihi decided to accept being a subordinate of the Shimazu Clan. At the same time, a marriage ceremony for Yoshihi and Yoshiharu should be held.

*“... Yoshihi.”*

*“Fufu. The unity of the four sisters. They are certainly people whom I can win against alone. Yoshiharu, was it fate that the Sagara Clan would be conquered by the Shimazu Clan?”*

*“It is so. The Sagara Clan will eventually surrender to the Shimazu Clan. That is their destiny, but our defeat was because of me,”* Yoshiharu lowered his head.

*“I’m sorry. My knowledge is useless. The Shimazu Four Sisters and the men of Hayato from Satsuma are too strong. With their combined strength and wisdom of the sisters, as well as the cooperation of their servants, there is no weakness at all.”*

*“It’s okay. What you thought back then was a good thing, Yoshiharu. Anyway, for now, we need to survive. We will live and wait until the day we are independent from the Shimazu Clan comes in the future. A vulgar man with a monkey face like you is not entirely suitable as my husband. But, well, it is fortunate that you have the same family name even though you are not from the same lineage as my family. I will endure it even if I don’t want to. Although when I’m thinking about our first marriage night, I just feel nauseated about it.”*

*“Anyway, my life is already forfeited. Nobuna will definitely send her tekkosen Atakebune to hunt me down one day... Hey, it hurts, that hurts! What are you doing?!”*

*“Idiot! To ignore the reward of receiving my abuse by talking about another woman! And why are you saying that your life is being forfeited? Isn’t that an impolite thing to say to me who is going to be your wife?”* [The Tsundere faction has regained a foothold after Nobuna’s long absence in this novel]

*“Why is your abuse considered as a reward?”*

*“It is only natural! Every vassal of my clan. They are all happy to the point of shedding tears of joy when I abuse them.”*

*“Somehow, I don’t want to understand it. So if I spend my time with you, it will only be torture?”*

*“Of course. The you right now are too annoying so I need to train you properly as my servant. First of all, address me as Yoshihi-sama. In the bedroom, you must prostrate yourself and bow while pressing 3 fingers of each hand on the floor, okay? This shall be the beginning of our new life. It is not my problem. The one Oda Nobuna should bore grudge against must be the Shimazu Clan. I would like to see what face that Oda Nobuna will have when she explodes in anger, ha ha ha!”*

*“Yoshihi, why do you look like you are enjoying this situation?”*

*“No, I’m not enjoying this! Everything is for the sake of defending the Sagara Clan”*

The decision had made a different turn.

Yoshihi would never marry anyone, but as soon as the one whom she would be married with was Yoshiharu, she immediately agreed.

Iehisa became teary-eyed and stood up unconsciously.

Iehisa could never be able to resist Toshihisa, but she simply couldn’t stand being silent anymore. Though the Ito and Sagara allied army was defeated with *Tsuri no Buse*, Toshihisa would never acknowledge it. Not even allowed to stand on the battlefield. Even her friendship with Yoshiharu when she had met him at Kyoto was going to be taken away.

*“Nyaa nyaa, why, but why? Why does Sagara need to be the groom?”*

*“No. It’s still too early for you to marry, Iehisa. Because I am in charge of devising strategies for the Shimazu Clan, you must follow my decision. I am not jealous or disturbed if my younger sister were to find a husband sooner than me.”*

*“... Toshihisa-nee... Do you really hate...”*

*“That is right. I also don’t care much about love, yet to easily marry someone simply for your emotions as your reason is nonsense; I hate children who think like that,”* Toshihisa turned her face away.

*“Yoshihiro-nee! Please stop Toshihisa-nee! Please stop her!”*

*“No, Iehisa. This is a good idea. And there is also another meaning for this marriage. It is also meant to provoke Oda Nobuna, right Toshihisa? If we take Sagara Yoshiharu, it will provoke the prideful Oda Nobuna to rage, and then she would never be able to mediate the Otomo Clan and our clan. Because the chance that the Otomo Clan would try to attack the Mori Clan from behind is eliminated, the Oda Clan wouldn’t be able to send any troops to Kyushu as well. It is because they will have no choice but to fight a decisive battle against the Mori Clan on their own. Now that we have achieved our wished Tripartite Unification by defeating the Ito Clan, an opportunity of uniting the whole Kyushu has finally come to the Shimazu Clan.”*

*“Yes, that’s right, Yoshihiro-nee. I vehemently refuse the reconciliation between the Otomo and Shimazu Clans. We are the people of Kyushu and so will decide the fate of Kyushu. We do not care about the authority of someone who rules over this world. We swear our allegiance to the Konoe Clan who stood up as the most distinguished noble clan among the nobles of Yamato-Gosho. We have no intention of following the traitorous Oda Clan who suddenly rose to high position from being an upstart daimyo and also hung out with Christians.”*

*“Well said, Toshihisa! Iehisa, we will find a good husband for you. It’s too early for you to marry now. In addition, if you want to search for a husband, you must get rid of that wicked tongue and that thinly flat chest of yours first, Toshihisa.”*

*“Didn’t I say that I didn’t want to talk about breasts, onesama!”*

*“Nyaa, nyaa. With the atmosphere being like this, is there any way to reject this situation with one person alone?”*

*“Accept it, Iehisa! Are you going to reject my idea? You seriously want to marry Sagara Yoshiharu, despite that the only relationship you have with him is that he took care of you like a person taking care of a child back at Kyoto? If you want to save him because he is your friend, then is there any problem with this decision?”*

*“Aah... Yes... I understand.”*

Yoshihisa clapped her hands and tapped the depressed Iehisa’s shoulders, *“It’s alright, it’s alright, Iehisa-chan has done well.”*

*“Here, have a Chinko-dango [It’s actually Shinko-dango, but Sagara misheard her; thus the Chinko dango. R-18 object. Google it at your own risk], a specialty of Satsuma Kawauchi.”*

*“Chinko-dango?!”* Yoshiharu doubted his ears, but Yoshihi corrected him, *“It’s Shinko-dango, don’t get it wrong!”*

*What’s with this Yoshiharu’s indecent face that I just saw. Will I really become this monkey’s wife? Now I have begun to regret it,* Yoshihi’s face began to distort in shame.

*“With this, Oda Nobuna would certainly feel broken-hearted. When it comes to ruining love of other people, Toshihisa-chan would definitely be the best among the world. I should put Toshihisa-chan’s portrait as one of the wickedest people of the world inside my room. As what they say, “Evil is quick;” so, without further ado, let’s hold the marriage ceremony tomorrow morning. Prepare to assemble all of the retainers!”*

Yoshihisa who seemed to have mediated the marriage ceremony waved her fan to Yoshiharu and laughed.

*“Well then, you two are welcomed as part of our Shimazu Clan. As long as you are not plotting any rebellion, our place will be pleasant to live in. Although the fact that men must fight at the frontlines risking their lives to death at the battlefield for almost every day and Toshihisa-chan’s persistent nagging as your sister-in-law coupled with the volcanic ash of the Sakurajima Island would make you feel a bit uncomfortable, hahaha!”*

*“I am still a maiden, and am not their sister-in-law, Yoshihisa-nee.”*

*“However, if there is any sign of betrayal, then you will be killed without any argument even if you have done distinguished services. Don’t forget that. Especially you, Sagara Yoshiharu. If you ever make a move at Iehisa, I will sever your head from your body immediately.”*

Yoshihiro glared at Yoshiharu as she released a dreadful bloodlust, narrowing her eyes.

Iehisa was, however, still not entirely convinced by the whole thing and silently sat in the corner without moving.

Even though he was concerned of Iehisa’s situation, Yoshiharu couldn’t help her because Yoshihiro was still watching.

*“The ceremony will be held tomorrow morning? It just feels a bit too sudden, and I just can’t feel that this is real, Yoshiharu.”*

*“Don’t think too much about it, Yoshihi. We will marry for the sake of survival. We are not going to be married as a true couple.”*

*“But if we’d be, wouldn’t you be killed by Oda Nobuna, Yoshiharu?”*

*“I don’t know if Nobuna would forgive us; rather than having the two of us killed right now, there is probably a better way for us to survive tomorrow. Although there will be many plights that the Shimazu Clan will impose to us in the future, we can support each other and live.”*

*“Ah. Indeed, it is for survival. But Yoshiharu, are you fine with being married with me? Aren’t you the world’s number one womanizer? Is it because I am both noble and beautiful that you are okay with it?”*

*“Umm. With Yoshihi as my partner, I don’t feel that strange. If the other person is either Kobayakawa or Kenshin, I do feel like my heart being crushed for betraying Nobuna. But I don’t feel that from you, I wonder why?”*

*“Wait a second. Does that mean that you don’t treat me like a woman? It’s shocking of how rude you can be! What part of me who am praised as the sun of Higo are lacking? A-A-Ah, that’s right. Perhaps because I am too beautiful and sublime just like Guanyin that you couldn’t look at me with indecent eyes, and couldn’t help but to prostrate yourself, is that how it is? How very cute!”*

*“Oh dear, it’s because you have that kind of personality. I would probably become your servant rather than your husband. I can clearly see that future.”*

*“So you do understand now? Although a family is unnecessary, having a servant will come in handy. But making a baby would be a trouble. Conceiving the child is... Just imagining that I am pregnant is horrifying. Will you really not try to assault me?”*

The two of them had been caught in a dilemma now. However, Yoshihi did not have any sense of crisis. In fact, they were trying to find hope in adversity and live on. This was a country of Shura—perhaps it was the strength that Yoshihi possessed that allowed her to survive in Kyushu.

Yoshiharu thought, *Is this because of Soun's influence, or the atmosphere of Shura? As for me, it's too early to give up now. I should survive together with Yoshihi*, and reconsidered his thought.

*Now I am getting further away from reaching Otomo Sorin, but this is all so that Yoshihi will survive. Death does not matter because I am prepared for that, but I should strive to survive until I can prevent Nobuna from the fate of Honno-ji. That is why this marriage with Yoshihi is unavoidable. I will continue to drive Shimazu and Otomo into reconciliation by working together with Yoshihi. This way, Nobuna could escape from this current predicament.*

It was at that time that Yoshiharu began to accept his marriage with Yoshihi in his heart

THUNK!

Suddenly, Yoshiharu felt like his heart had exploded.

*Eh? Is this the result of having betrayed Nobuna that I feel this painful beating of my heart? No, it's different! The pain is on a different level! How could my body be like this? No good, my body is slowly losing strength!*

*I don't understand this! Am I going to die?* Yoshiharu tried to raise his voice. But his voice wouldn't come out. He couldn't even put strength into his throat.

*"Yoshiharu? What's wrong, Yoshiharu?"*

*"Sagara, what happened? Take a breath!"*

*"Eh eh? What has happened? Why has Sagara Yoshiharu's body become transparent?"*

*"That is stupid. Isn't that just an illusion, Anesha?"*

*"This is bad. If this man dies now, Sagara Yoshihi will commit suicide. And then the written oath will take effect. At least until the marriage is finished, he must be alive!"*

Yoshihi's and the Shimazu Four Sisters' voices gradually became less audible.

*Why did I suddenly get sick? I don't understand! There have been no symptoms that I am sick until now... Hanbei... Juubei-chan... Nobuna...)*

Yoshiharu's consciousness suddenly faded.

...

His vision collapsed to oblivion.

## Part 2

*"I have found you, Sagara! There is an important matter to report!"*

When he regained his consciousness, Yoshiharu found himself lying down in one of the rooms inside Uchi Castle.

The parmachist of the Shimazu Clan said, *"It must be exhaustion due to the shipwreck incident followed by the clan battle and the Four Sisters' meeting. Once he gets a good sleep, he would wake up immediately."*

Therefore, the Shimazu acted in haste in order to make the Sagara Clan their subordinate and began to make preparations for Yoshiharu and Yoshihi's wedding ceremony.

Yoshihi was transferred to another room by Toshihisa who was vigilant, *"This may be a ploy of Yoshihi for Yoshiharu to feign an illness."*

Iehisa who insisted to nurse Yoshiharu was also driven out, *"It's dangerous,"* for that reason.

Yoshiharu was pushed into a small bedroom and slept alone.

But there was one person who knew of the real nature of his problem, saying that, *"It's not just simple fatigue,"* inside the castle.

And so, Hachisuka Goemon sneaked inside Yoshiharu's room and hung on the ceiling.

*"Goemon? Why are you in Satsuma?"*

*"Actually, I was onboard a ship to Bungo too. Though I had sneaked in, when that incident happened with Sagawa-shi, I was gowin in the wong diwection-, This is the humiriwiation of Gomon's raife."* [My mandible is fuqing hurting]

*"Oh, is that how it is? Though the latter part is incomprehensible, but at least I understand most of it. But back then, when I was met by that incident, you should have come out quickly."*

*"The sea current at that time was too fast so I couldn't catch up; I am ashamed."*

*"But now, you have found me become a prisoner of the Shimazu Clan."*

*"When I heard that a fake 'Sagara Yoshiharu' got drifted to Higo and lost a fight against the Shimazu, I immediately went to Satsuma."*

Kuroda Kanbei and the other had successfully arrived to Bungo safely; they had entered negotiation with Otomo Sorin, and now, Goemon explained the whole thing, biting her lips throughout. The mysterious man Gaspard who was knowledgeable of the history of eastern and western religious mythologies had some strange technique to foresee and manipulate the future; he was trying to make Nobuna the savior of the east, namely the “Prester John.” This was the first time Yoshiharu heard of him.

*“Why does he want to make a world war by throwing Nobuna against Ottoman Empire?”*

*“That was Frois-dono's opinion. We have no idea what that guy's true intentions are. That guy has quite a deep mind which we cwan't fathwom. His hishtowy, name, or feis, they all seem feiku. I havh absowutely no idea what ish gowing on now.”*

*“Has the negotiation with Otomo Sorin been successful? If we can't prevent the clash between the Otomo and Shimazu Clans, we can't stop the Mori Clan's advancement either.”*

*“With the Namban missionary beside her untwustwoothy, it is difficult without Sagawashi's skiwful tongue to decweive Hime-dono. But right now, it's not the twaime for thwat.”*

*“... Maybe you have already known this but tomorrow morning, I am going to have a marriage ceremony with Sagara Yoshihi. This is a political marriage to make the Sagara Clan a subordinate of the Shimazu Clan.”*

*“This is bad, Sagara-shi! If you were to be married tomorrow, you will disappear from this world!”* [No typo, consider it as her cute way of referring to the Sagara Clan]

*“Eh? I am going to disappear, from this world? What do you mean?”*

Goemon told him. The Namban missionary was telling something about “Sagara Extermination Plan” to Kanbei, and told him what she has been told.

*“A plan to exterminate me?”*

*“When Sagara-shi decides in his heart to marry Yoshihi, you will disappear. Right now Sagara-shi is already starting to disappear.”*

*“What kind of thing is that? If I marry Yoshihi, I will disappear from this world? I don't understand that theory at all.”*

Goemon who had come down to his bedroom took a scarecrow from her chest and showed it to Yoshiharu.

*“What is this?”*

*“This is the doll where I put Sagara's hair inside as a sign of our contract when we first exchanged it.”*

*“Was it just after Tokichirou-jiisan died getting shot by a stray bullet? Back then, I was shocked of how he suddenly died in front of me, and it happened a long time ago so I don’t quite remember about it. So what’s with this doll? Does it have some kind of special power? Can it tell where my location is?”*

*“Sagara-uji, have you forgotten? The Hachisuka Style of ninjutsu does not rely on spiritual power. But the way of Shinano has a different means.”*

*“Oh, I see. Goemon’s art concealment is actually only using her body as a weapon.”*

*“The doll itself is just a proof of contract. But because it has been inserted with Sagara’s hair, it has become something like your alter ego or Bunshin.”*

*“Are you saying that using a human hair to substitute their soul made this doll look like a kiku ningyo [chrysanthemum doll]?”*

The straw doll began to shrink from its previous size, and Goemon started to explain its purpose.

*“That said, the size was bigger when I saw it for the first time.”*

*“Sagara’s existence has begun to disappear! That’s why the ningyou is beginning to shrink too!”*

*“... I am disappearing? What is the reason?”*

*“Sagara-uji has fallen into the scheme of that Namban missionary who uses a black art.”*

Goemon explained the full extent of Gaspard’s “Sagara Extermination Plan” as bit her lips, eo ipso stuttering.

*“Apparently, the other Sagara has a frail presence at war but has formidable vitality, and that she and Sagara Yoshiharu share the same lineage.”*

*“So I really am Yoshihi’s direct descendant!” Yoshiharu shouted and stood up.*

*“So Yoshihi was really my ancestor? But she said that she would carry out a celibate life until death.”*

*“Although it seems that you have some affinity with her, you do not wish to embrace her [as in to engage in sexual intercourse]?”*

*“Well. It’s just like the feeling I had when I first met the younger sister Tokuchiyo-chan... But since Yoshihi and Tokuchiyo-chan were sisters, maybe it is the same thing as well?”*

*“Maybe it is because the ancestors were miraculously able to meet the descendant even though it should be impossible. Because of the same blood coursing through your veins that you mutually feel affection to each other.”*

*“Goemon. I once lived at Yokohama but I am sure that my ancestors came from Kyushu. But it has never occurred to us that we had the pedigree belonging to the Sagara Clan of Higo. To begin with, all the direct descendants of the Sagara family should have perished during the Edo period. They could only adopt children from other clans in order to preserve their clan.”*

*“Uhm. So even if the “blood of the direct descendant” dies out, it will flow to the blood of the family branch, and will continue and prosper. Is that how it is?”*

*“That is quite right. Even if I really am at the end of the Sagara family of Higo lineage, I must be a descendant from an obscure or less known family branch. It may be a possible explanation. However, I don’t think that Yoshihi who holds antipathy against her family would ever make a baby in the future.”*

*“If there is such a future, I would like to see it,” Yoshiharu thought.*

*“By the way, Sagara, where is Yokohama?”*

*“It is located at the eastern side of Sagami Province in this period. It is a ‘town from the future.’ It’s a huge landfill area located at the coast. My father was involved in its development as an architect too. But the place where I lived in was located between the vacant undeveloped area covered with weeds and the district filled with many futuristic high-story buildings and the Yokohama Station. Sometimes when night came, raccoons would come out. The disparity compared to the group of multi-floor buildings is really huge. It was a town truly made by human hand.”*

*“I don’t understand future lingo; those are all words I’ve heard for the first time. Sagara-shi stayed in the capital by himself?”*

*“Kansai-born people are good at comedic acts... No, wait a second. Then this world, the past of this ‘world’ is actually connected to the world where I was born? There were no such things as princess generals in the history I know. And the warlord who advocated Tenka Fubu was Nobunaga, and not Nobuna. So I thought that this might be a parallel world that was closely similar to my own world, was it not so? I’ve never thought much about this.”*

*“Sagara-uji. This problem should not be discussed without Takenaka-uji. Right now, the most important thing to talk about is that Nambwan misshwony’s schemes,” Goemon tried to bring back the topic.*

*“So Gaspard used a sacred treasure to send me to Higo to meet Yoshihi. But how would that eliminate me?”*

Goemon said, *“Gaspard stated that if two people with blood relations meet each other, a strong attraction will occur and familial affection will be born. The relationship would remain stable if it were in a peaceful world. But in the world of Shuwas like Kyushu which is filled with wars and disasters, it will swirl around.”*

Furthermore, the enemy of the Sagara Clan which was the Shimazu Clan was extraordinarily strong. Even if Sagara Yoshiharu who had come from the future would come to help, as long as the Ito Clan lost, the disadvantages that the Sagara Clan had would not change.

If the Sagara Clan would be cornered in a predicament where their bloodline would end, Sagara Yoshihi who had yet to give a birth to a child would marry someone to leave an heir.

However, Sagara Yoshihi held hatred against her family because she had grown up surrounded by internal discords within her clan; and so, she was not a princess who would take a husband in order to continue her family bloodline.

So until now, she had yet to fulfill her responsibility as a princess, which was to give birth to an heir.

*“Therefore, the only man whom Sagara Yoshihi would choose as her partner would be the one she holds affection with.”*

*“The man whom Yoshihi feels affection for. Kai Soun is an existence akin to her father, and he already has a wife and children too. Yoshihi looks like a daughter to Soun as well. But according to their regulation, a vassal that serves the Sagara Clan can't be taken as a husband. Therefore, they can only take someone from the Sagara family.”*

*“However, many members of the Sagara Clan who were qualified as groom candidates were already killed by Kai Soun during their rebellion.”*

*“But those who've survived and carry the lineage of the Sagara Clan are also being alienated by Yoshihi. Even her younger sister, Tokuchiyo, is also like that. Now that it has come to this, Yoshihi will need to choose a husband.”*

*“But right now, the matter of their internal discord is irrelevant to the chosen man. Also, if the man has the same surname, then it is possible to insist on this marriage without objection.”*

*“... In other words, it shall be me?”*

*“That is how it is. The joining between you two along with the capture by the Shimazu was all a part of Gaspard's calculation.”*

*“... Mmm. When I was appointed as Yoshihi's husband, why didn't I reject it? Although I knew that I would be abused badly, I did not refuse it seriously. Rather, I did not expect that I would accept it immediately.”*

*“Maybe you like her. Perhaps, have you fallen in love with her?”*

*“How could that be? She is my ancestor.”*

*“But this problem has moved to a worse direction. If Sagara-uji marries Yoshihi, a big contradiction would appear. The contradiction is that Sagara’s ancestor would be none other than Sagara himself.”* Goemon said it, holding the doll which was shrinking slowly.

*“If this doll disappears then Sagara-uji will disappear as well.”*

*“My ancestor from four hundred years ago. In other words, Yoshihi’s husband is none other than myself? This is certainly a big contradiction. If this goes on. The human existence called ‘Sagara Yoshiharu’ would be cycled infinitely. In order for the world to fix this problem, the only way is to erase the contradictory element...”*

*“That is right. The Sagara-uji who lives in the future world, is also the Sagara who lives in this world.”*

*“It would counterbalance my existence and make me disappear from this world, as if I did not exist from the very beginning. So this is the meaning of Gaspard’s words.”*

*“It is as what you’ve said. The strongest point of Sagara-uji which is being loved by the girls of this world is being taken advantage of and used as your weakness instead.”*

*“Shit. That guy is too smart. Moreover, he has a technique to predict the future. Is there any chance for us to win?”*

*“If he kills Sagara directly, it would make an inconsistency in his future prediction technique. Sagara-uji surviving until now was not only because of luck but because that person kept hiding in the dark,”* Goemon said.

*“Well, the negotiation with Otomo Sorin would be difficult since she trusts him. At this situation, only Sagara-uji can do it.”*

*“However, with things to continue proceeding as they have, and when Sagara-uji marries Yoshihi tomorrow morning, you will disappear completely,”* Goemon muttered, her red pupil eyes making a glare.

*“This is bad.”*

*“Furthermore, even if the wedding isn’t done formally, and as long as you exchange vows [fun fact: this phrase, in kanji, also means “to engage in sexual intercourse”] with Yoshihi, it would end with the same conclusion. So, even if Sagara-uji is afraid of Nobuna-hime or rejects the marriage with Yoshihi; it would be the same if you were to have a vow with her, even if it were just a simple kiss on the cheek,”* Goemon warned him.

*“Therefore, the result which that Namban missionary said will immediately come out.”*

*“So, everything would end for me even if it were just a kiss on the cheek. Then I need to avoid kissing her even if it were just an accident,” Yoshiharu groaned.*

*“... If we kill Yoshihi, Sagara-shi will continue to live on. The things that happened in the past will not become for naught. The Sagawa-clan will become something else and a new Sagawa-clan will be born.”*

*“If there is a time span of 400 years, even if there is a small contradiction, it could be resolved temporarily. Even if Yoshihi dies without giving birth to a child, Sagara Yoshiharu would eventually be born from another branch of the Sagara Clan. For example, the lineage of Sagara Yoshihi’s younger sister, Tokuchiyo. Over the time, the fate of ‘Sagara’s birth’ would be consistent,” Goemon said so.*

*“Even if I have recommended such method, Sagara-uji would still choose the same choice, right?”*

*“Ah. Between my life and Yoshihi’s. If we can only choose one then the answer is obvious. Besides, Yoshihi is my ancestor. I cannot kill her.”*

*“Then what would happen if Sagara-uji disappears? What will happen to Tenka Fubu? And the problem with Honnō-ji?”*

*“All the moments of your life would be decided in this one time, Sagara-uji. If you were ‘never born from the beginning’ then the will and ambition that you’ve left behind to other people will not exist. It is the same as not meeting them in the first place. You may disappear from Nobuna-hime’s, and Takenaka-uji’s memories according to Kuroda-uji,” Goemon narrowed her eyes.*

Although Goemon was explaining it while biting her tongue, Yoshiharu understood most of it.

*“Oh, I see. That is why he didn’t kill me. The words that I’ve talked until now, my behavior and the time that I spent in the Sengoku period would disappear from everyone’s memory. If this goes on then the incident of Honnō-ji cannot be prevented anymore.”*

*“Indeed. Gaspard would try to avoid the incident of Honnō-ji as well, but once Sagara-uji is forgotten by everyone else, Nobuna-hime would be controlled by Gaspard.”*

*“... He intends to make Nobuna a tool for the Crusade.”*

*“Moreover, Gaspard with his power alone can’t prevent the Honnō-ji incident. After all, he doesn’t have the same thing that Sagara has in his mind.”*

Yoshiharu was shocked.

After his feeling that had been wavering had managed to settle down, he opened his mouth again.

*“... If that is the case then it will be impossible for me to leave this world without any regret. Because I think that the things that prove my existence will remain in everyone’s mind; that is why I didn’t feel any regret when Yoshihiro was about to behead me at Kizakihara.”*

*“Oh. You’ve got relaxed faster now. You have become stronger after fighting around for a long time,”* Goemon nodded.

*“So what should we do? Even if I kill that Namban missionary, there is no way that we can stop Sagara’s disappearance.”*

*“No matter who the enemies are, I will never resort to assassination. But this situation is bad. Is there any way for me to survive without using Yoshihi, Goemon?”*

*“If we reveal the circumstances of your relationship with Yoshihi, we might be able to persuade the Shimazu Clan.”*

*“So shall we left Uchi Castle immediately?”* Goemon asked.

*“It isn’t only I and Yoshihi, but all of the 500 Sagara troops have also become prisoners. It is impossible. If we were to take such action, all of them will be killed. Yoshihi won’t agree to it either. That girl shut her heart because of the internal discord she had experienced. But she is actually a gentle girl,”* Yoshiharu shook his head.

*“I can only persuade the Shimazu 4 Sisters to cancel the wedding. But the decision has been made during the 4 Sisters’ meeting. In order to cancel the wedding, I also need to gain all of the four sisters’ approval.”*

*“This is a difficult problem. To begin with, Sagara-uji is locked up in this room.”*

*“I met Iehisa back then at Kyoto, and I have met the rest of them today. I also need to convince them.”*

*“But tomorrow is the deadline. And the time now is already past sunset. We only have less than half a day remaining.”*

*“The only one here with me is Goemon. Can you do anything?”*

*“No. I am a ninja that lurks inside the shadow and remains hidden. I am not supposed to go out in the open. It would make things suspicious.”*

*“Yes, indeed. Moreover, you always bite your lips when you talk. I doubt anyone from Satsuma would be able to understand you.”*

*“I... I... I... If it's a few words, I cwan still dwo it, you Ojaru!”*

*“Oh. I haven't heard Goemon's 'ojaru' for a while. Speaking of 'Ojaru,' back when I was at Kyoto, that black-toothed Maro made a full use of 'ojaru.’*

*“Hohoho. It seems that you will need Maro's help this time, Sagara Yoshiharu de-ojaru.”*

*“Ah, that's it. That's that Maro's dialect. To actually listen to Maro's dialect at Satsuma which is located in Southern Kyushu. Wait, isn't this Konoe-ossan's voice? Why is the Kampaku at Satsuma?”*

*“I didn't even notice his presence,”* Goemon was surprised, and thereafter flew up into the ceiling and hid.

At the same time, the bedroom's door opened silently... There, stood the fearsome and wise Konoe Sakihisa who had entered the room graciously - the Kampaku who stood on the apex of the nobles. [During their conversation, Sakihisa addressed Yoshiharu with “kisama,” which was historically a politely formal title/pronoun, similar to how Yoshihiro did; thus, it's unclear whether he derided Yoshiharu or merely called him politely. Conversely, Saru addressed him with “anata,” which is a very miraculous instance if you know this person very well.]

*“Hohoho. It's been a long time, Sagara Yoshiharu. You should have gone to Bungo, but why have you been captured as a prisoner of the Shimazu Clan?”*

*“Ack! Konoe Sakihisa, why are you here in Uchi Castle at Satsuma? Moreover, at this time too. Did you abandon the Oda Administration and leave the capital?”*

*“It's different! I was sent by Oda Nobuna as a messenger to the Shimazu Clan! To actually make this Kampaku run an errand to Satsuma, that woman is truly terrible! Nevertheless, this is all so that the Shimazu would reconcile with the Otomo Clan.”*

*“Indeed, there was a mention of it,”* Yoshiharu thought.

Now that the Oda Clan had been trapped from both the east and west, they couldn't send any envoy to Kyushu any more. So who would go to Satsuma? Nobuna found the answer: to send Konoe Sakihisa as the envoy.

*“The Shimazu Clan managed this place at Kyushu which originally belonged to the Konoe Clan for generations. I can be said as the master of the Shimazu Clan. Because Shimazu would not listen to a boorish country bumpkin clan like Oda, it is up to me to solve this matter. As soon as I entered Uchi Castle, I was welcomed with warm hospitality. Once Shimazu Yoshihiro had a look at me, she instantly went pale and fainted from excitement and other emotions. Hohoho. For I am the noble Kampaku. It is only natural that all samurai clans would turn like that.”*

*“Well, it’s because Shimazu Yoshihiro is a pure... Or rather, a stubborn person.”*

*“The attraction built by the Namban missionary possessed the Otomo Clan and thus has put Japan at a critical situation. It has also made the Yamato-Gosho at jeopardy as well. Therefore, Sagara Yoshiharu, I will help you only this time, at this moment.”*

*“Thanks. Now, please give the order to the Shimzu Clan to release me and Yoshihi! If Yoshihi and her 500 soldiers return to Hitoyoshi Castle then I can immediately go to Bungo.”*

*“I can’t. I asked them to free the prisoners once I had entered the castle, but they rejected it coldly. This is a country of Shuras. Though they respect me as their master, their war policies are a different matter. With this, the matter of connecting ties with the Otomo Clan would be hard.”*

*“It won’t go smoothly like back then at the capital, huh...”*

*“However there is but one method remaining,” Konoe laughed.*

*“Fortunately. All of the four Shimazu sisters are unmarried maidens. So we will seduce all of them. To make them fall in love. The power that can change the law of the samurais of a country of Shura is the love of a maiden. And so, we will fascinate the four sisters in one night.”*

[Just Konoe Sakihisa being a best friend straight out of a galge.]

*“Kuu-! To use seduction like that. Even Ukita Naoie won’t do something like that.”*

*“If there were another method then I would have used them earlier. But now, we have to change their hearts completely tonight.”*

*“But four people at once? Isn’t that impossible?”*

*“It’s impossible for me to do this alone. Our targets are four people. So we shall divide them and each handle two of them. Although it would be difficult to seduce a maiden of the prestigious Shimazu family with that monkey face of yours, an elegant person such as I shall make up for your disadvantages. Hohoho.”*

Konoe laughed, exposing his black teeth.

*“Eee. Really? You’ll seduce those girls? How?”*

*“It is impossible no matter what. And with this Maro’s black teeth, it will make an opposite effect. We should just kill him, Sagara-uji.”*

*“Wait, wait, Goemon. He is still the Kampaku, you know!”*

*“But, Sagara. This man is too creepy to even seduce a girl. It even feels as if his teeth smell.”*

*“However, during the Heian period, he would actually be considered a handsome man, you know!”*

*“Hohoho. So this pitiful ninja does not understand the beauty and elegance of a noble. Though I look like this, I am known at the capital as the ‘Virgin Killer.’ I behave myself because Oda Nobuna is keeping a close watch on me. But if I were to be serious, I could make any maiden fall helplessly.”* [I know of a hentai anime with a protagonist who looks just like Konoe. However, it’s NTR; thus the strict gag order.]

*“It is absolutely a lie.”*

*“But, Goemon. There should be a good reason for his confidence, although I do not know the exact reason for it.”*

*“To use the position of Kampaku to violate many maidens, we should just kill him quickly.”*

*“How rude! This one will never do such boorish deeds like that!”*

*“Just leave it to this Konoe Sakihisa. If the two of us seduce the four sisters and make them falter, all of our problems shall be solved! There is no need to thank me; the ‘Virgin Killer’ shall help this young man on his women troubles. As a noble, this is only natural,”* Konoe once again smiled confidently, showing his glittering teeth.

This smile made Goemon tremble and want to kill him, though Yoshiharu prevented her.

*“I do not want to be killed by Nobuna nor do I want to seduce the Shimazu Sisters for such purpose. Though, it is necessary to overturn the decision regarding the marriage ceremony. But, I don’t intend to interfere on Konoe-ojiisan’s method. But let me be the one to persuade Iehisa. After all, she is still a child. Would that be alright?”*

*“This is a useless plan. The princess generals of the Shura countries would not be perplexed by love affairs and change their opinion just like that,”* Goemon looked indifferent.

*“Forget it. There are a lot of flaws in jii-san’s plan. But isn’t it better than just sitting around and waiting to disappear? Anyways, we need change our situation now.”*

*“That is so, but it is still bound to be a failure.”*

*“What is with this ‘jii-san,’ Sagara Yoshiharu? Besides, there is no other way than this!”*

*“You might use your position as the Kampaku to push down the loyal Yoshihiro, right? Although I did say that I didn’t want to interfere in your means, but I absolutely don’t want to collude with an evil man like that.”*

*“How boorish. In the first place, grasping a young maiden’s immature heart is important. That’s right, seducing them through a violent way will only result for the opposite effect.”*

*“If that is the case then how do you know that all of them are virgins?”*

*“If you look at their eyes then you will know. After all, this one is famous as the ‘Virgin Killer’ at the capital. Tonight, the two of us shall persuade them to overturn the decision of carrying out the marriage ceremony at dawn. I myself could solve the problem alone, but there is not enough time to seduce all four girls at one night. Then, do you know what we should do?”*

By the way, Goemon who couldn’t stand looking at Konoe’s black teeth when he talked, *“When I look at his teeth, I feel like slicing my own eyes,”* hid herself in the ceiling, covering her eyes with her hands.

*“I’m sorry, Goemon, I will compensate for it later once this problem is solved,”* Yoshiharu pressed his palms together.

*“Sagara Yoshiharu. With a black-toothed, white-powdered-faced person such as I who possess the noble lineage of the Fujiwara Clan and both charm and elegance, any maiden’s heart could be captured... Although I’ve said that, because the people we are facing with are princess generals of Shuras who put importance on military honor more than on a noble’s elegance, it would be rather difficult for me if I keep this court noble’s appearance.”*

*“Well, probably.”*

*“Humu. That is why I shall seduce them through the ‘warrior’s way.’ I will seduce them by using gentle and direct words with a simple image. For princess generals who do not understand things like elegance, this is the most effective way. That is why I shall remove my makeup only for tonight.”*

*“Remove your makeup?”*

*“Sagara Yoshiharu. You usually see me with my black-toothed appearance, but once you see my true form, you will be surprised. Hohoho. Let me know how laughable it really is that I have to adopt an ugly, monkey-faced person like you as my son and make him succeed the position of Kampaku.”*

Goemon stuck her head out from the ceiling, *“Does he have a few screws loose in his head?”* Yoshiharu tilted his head, *“Your true form?”*

Konoe Sakihisa cleaned his black teeth and white-powdered face, as well as wiped his blackened eyebrows out, and revealed his face without makeup for the first time. He also loosened his braided long hair down to his waist.

Goemon who had seen Konoe Sakihisa's real face bit down her tongue, and Yoshiharu got mortified due to shock and was now looking completely like a monkey.

*"Fu. I do not want to drop my makeup and look like a savage in front of others. This is my true face. So how is it, ninja-san and pitiful monkey Sagara Yoshiharu? Even if a high class noble of the Fujiwara Clan like me were to remove their makeup, I would still look beautiful. Probably in your future, a person like me would be worshipped as the paragon of beauty."*

*"Oooh! How could this be?! To be this h-h-h-h-h-handsome!"*

*"It's a lieeeeeeeeeee! This good-looking face with refined bitterness. Moreover, having a scent peculiar to a savage beast that is enough to kill a man! This is even beyond Asakura Yoshiharu!"*

*"Sagara Yoshiharu. I who had taken up the sword and fought together with Uesugi Kenshin, while harboring the ambition to unify the Kanto region with the princess general, do not treat me like a soft, weak man. It's too impolite."*

*"I am a man who has learned the sword of killing together with the previous shogun Ashikaga Yoshiteru under Tsukahara Bokuden and Kamizumi Nobutsuna. I have countless experiences in killing Yagyu ninjas who aimed at Miyoshi Matsunaga. My bloodlust and smell of blood are covered by my elegant court makeup," Konoe said bluntly.*

*"Such an unthinkable person with a remarkable ability. I've always thought that you were a person who was only good at playing things like the kemari, but you are actually a master of sword swielding," Yoshiharu trembled.*

*"However, there is a false rumor amongst Kyoto's young people that I have crossed my swords with Oda Nobuna. I am the head of the Fujiwara Clan. I will never cut a woman even if she is hostile to me."*

*"Back then when you incite Eizan, you hired Sugitani Zenjubou to assassinate Nobuna."*

*"Hmph. A dirty work like killing women is something that only armed monks should do. It is not something that an elegant noble would do."*

*"If he weren't such a proud noble, Nobuna would have been assassinated by this fellow's sword somewhere... Nobuna has so much luck," Yoshiharu felt relieved.*

*"But a handsome man like this, this is the first I have seen one in the Sengoku period! Then what's with the previous Maro appearance? Is there any hidden purpose of deliberately using that ridiculous Maro appearance even though you are actually a handsome man beyond any measure?"*

*“Hmph. There is no time to waste tonight. It should have been impossible for an unattractive person like you to be adopted as my son and take over the position of Kampaku. However, don’t say a single word about my true form to Oda Nobuna.”*

*“Why?”*

*“I don’t know. But that woman naturally dislikes handsome men like me. It’s rare to see a woman that holds a unique sense of aesthetics in this world. Now that my will to restore the imperial rule has been overturned by Oda Nobuna who has also taken over the world, it would be a trouble if she were to hold prejudice for that reason. However, for the simple Shimazu Four Sisters, it won’t be a problem.”*

Konoe opened his eyes wide. It’s as if there were a bright aureole behind him, who had become the paragon of beauty; even his eyes were shining brightly.

*“Uuugh. It’s impossible to look at him directly in the eye.”*

*“Ack! Even though I shouldn’t have any intention for it, but why does looking at Konoe make my heart beat fast?”*

*“Humans have that natural reaction when they face an overwhelming beauty. It’s pointless if you want to reject it; I even feel pitiful about it so just give up, Sagara Yoshiharu.”*

*“It feels so humiliating.”*

*“Hmph”* Konoe snorted when he watched the two confused people.

*“Fool. I am beautiful when I use my makeup and elegant noble’s speech. If you were to see my appearance from the aesthetic sense of the people of the capital, I may look ridiculous. The samurais of the Sengoku period like you have simply forgotten the beauty and elegance of the olden eras.”*

*“Admiration my ass! Please give at least one-tenth portion of your face to me!”*

*“Sagara-uji is truly pitiful.”*

*“Sagara Yoshiharu. If I were to glare at a single simple foot soldier, you would be freed from house arrest now. You must persuade Iehisa who shares a friendship with you. And if there is time then go to Toshihisa. I will make Shimazu Yoshihiro who has the most challenging heart to surrender. Just feel relieved because I won’t lay my hand to her body. She would still be a virgin. If I dabble my hands too deeply, it will make troublesome matters later.”*

*“It feels like facing against the final boss. Though you seem confident,”* Yoshiharu subconsciously nodded.

*“Horrible... Just horrible,”* Goemon groaned inside the gap between the ceiling and the roof.

When Konoe who had returned to his true form kicked the room door flinging, *“How troublesome,”* and scolded the gathered Shimazu foot soldiers.

*“Wha? Who is this handsome man?”*

*“Fool! He can’t possibly be Sagara Yoshiharu!”*

*“H-H-H-H-Hot! MY BODY IS HOT!”*

*“U-U-U-o... It feels as if my body has awakened something.”*

*“What a noble gentleman! Please give us your order!”*

*“The effect is overwhelming even against men! This degree of outstanding beauty is already enough to be called a weapon!”* An unpleasant feeling of envy dwelled in Yoshiharu’s heart.

*“You impertinent people! Have you forgotten who I am? I am the Kampaku Konoe Sakihisa, the head of the Fujiwara Clan! This Kampaku orders you this. Release my friend Sagara Yoshiharu from his confinement. Let him freely walk around the castle.”*

*“Kampaku? You are his majesty?”*

*“HOLY SHIT!”*

*“We don’t know!”*

*“I will report it to the princess!”*

*“Sagara Yoshiharu is actually Kampaku-sama’s good friend! Please, please tell me that it isn’t true!”*

*“How enviable, Sagara Yoshiharu!”*

*“Die! Just go and die, Sagara Yoshiharu!”*

*“Back when Nobuna was hostile to him and the Oda was beleaguered by enemies, if he unleashed his true form, then everything would have been finished in an instant,”* Yoshiharu thought. *“It would be a disgrace if I show my face without makeup to the public,”* the man in question Konoe said it in an annoyed tone and clicked his tongue.

His sense of beauty was really different from normal people.

Yoshiharu noticed that Nobuna perhaps did not look beautiful in front of Konoe’s eyes.

*“Hmph. Even the people of Satsuma’s Hayato were powerless in front of true beauty. Let’s settle this problem before the sun rises, Sagara Yoshiharu.”*

*“It might be impossible to Konoe to seduce a young girl like Iehisa, but she might seriously listen to my story. It would be surprising if he were incompatible with the elders sister as well... Will he be alright?”*

Yoshiharu who had been released from confinement through Konoe’s “handsome man” power was shown to Iehisa’s room, guided by a polite Shimazu foot soldier. Although it was short, but Yoshiharu and Iehisa had spent some time at the capital together.

Inside her bed, Iehisa slept with swollen eyes.

*“Eh, eh? Sagara Yoshiharu? Why are you in my bed? Is your body fine?”*



*Is Yoshiharu doing yobai* [a Japanese archaic tradition of courting/procurement of sexual intercourse]? “*Nya nya nya!*” Iehisa frantically got up from her bed.

“*Suddenly doing yobai, it’s too intense! M-M-M-M-My heart is not ready yet!*” There were a lot of Japanese swords lined up on the tatami mats; she took one of them and formed a battle stance. She usually used Honshu dialect to speak, but now she was too surprised and excited. Iehisa was the youngest among the Shimazu 4 Sisters, and she had yet to master her Honshu dialect. That was why her Satsuma dialect came off when she got excited.

“*I’m sorry, I’m sorry. I’m not doing yobai. I want to ask you to stop my marriage ceremony with Yoshihi.*”

“*Nya nya nya, what? If it means something different then say it earlier!*”

“*You said that but you immediately took a battle stance.*”

The details of Iehisa’s pilgrimage to Ise Shrine and sightseeing at the capital were written in her diary, “*Iehisa-chan’s going to the capital!*” [Imagine it with a kawaii voice] ” Although she was a battle maniac, she was unexpectedly cheerful and wild. She was just like a younger sister to Yoshiharu.

Yoshiharu recalled the memory when he first met Iehisa at the capital. At that time, “*This is the capital in the Tale of Genji. There is a possibility that I will encounter a romantic meeting here,*” Iehisa’s eyes became moistened. When a merchant from Kyoto showed her some bad [perhaps lewd things like a chinko-dango] things, she got angry, “*Nya nya nya,*” and immediately took a battle stance.

Yoshiharu who was entrusted with the task of entertaining Iehisa by Nobuna hurriedly went to Iehisa and restrained her.

“*You are like the ‘cheat’ of the Satsuma families—the strongest among the Shimazu Four Sisters in terms of war tactics, Iehisa-chan, who is also in charge of their military tactics and regarded as their ‘bullet.’ But just when you got served with a bubudzuke, you belligerently prepared for a melee; it’s too warlike!*”

“*Umu. Sagara, Shimazu Iehisa is here, iokiwo!*” [She is currently speaking in her dialect, and she means ‘I am’ by ‘iokiwo.’]

“*Miscalculation, I? Omi Clan? Ioki?*”

“*I am Shimazu Iehisa, pleased to make your acquaintance, that is what I was saying!*”

“*So when you get angry, your accent comes out.*”

“*I took a lot of effort to narrowly speak Honshu dialect. Sometimes, my Satsuma dialect would come out, you know.*”

*“I’m sorry. When I was young, I used to listen to Satsuma dialect when watching an Edo Period drama. But the actors weren’t natives of Satsuma. And Satsuma dialect is inaudible to outsiders.”*

*“People who do not understand our dialect keep increasing one by one. The people from the capital would sometimes denounce us as if we were demon just by looking at us. Even I was pampered to grow as one of Satsuma’s beauties... Sometimes, we revert to our old behavior. The other thing is our qualification for seeking love. It’s just like a battle! To treat love as the same as a battle! Like a night raid; or a rush of battle during the morning, with a bit of Tanegashima gunpowder’s smells as an extra; just like a one-on one combat; or when using Tsuru no Buse; using many wicked schemes; or even having a large battle to exterminate that fellow who has discarded Japan and destroy the treacherous Christian kingdom in Kyushu; just by imagining them makes me feel excited!”*

*“Forget about that now, why are a lot of swords being stabbed at the tatami mats?! Is it because a general of Shuras is not allowed to fall in love that they don’t go to the capital?”*

*“Umm, Sagara Yoshiharu, is Iehisa a moji-oka?”* [It means ‘cute’ in Kyushu dialect]

*“Mojoka? Did you mean ‘a mourning woman?’ I didn’t know! I never knew that there were pitiful things like mourning women in the Sengoku period! How terrible! Was it a custom for a princess general, their daughter, to lose their chance for marriage in succession? The reception that I gave will be ruined if I make Iehisa enter into her battle stance! If this continues, Kyoto will turn to ashes!”*

*“What’s with the fuss, Sagara Yoshiharu?”*

*“It’s alright Iehisa-chan! You are not a mourning woman!”*

*“Nya nya!”* [These are tears now]

At that time, Yoshiharu didn’t know that “mojoka” in the Satsuma dialect meant “kawai.”

Iehisa who had been treated as a demon at the capital cautiously asked Yoshiharu, *“Is Iehisa cute?”*

Because she got rejected, the proud Iehisa went teary-eyed.

*“Uuuu! The man who I’d met at the capital straight away said that I am not cute right in front of my face! How humiliating!”*

Iehisa immediately wrote something in her diary while shaking.

*The number one retainer of the Oda Clan—Sagara Yoshiharu. He is an outrageous and impolite man who has a monkey face. Military power estimated to be 13, diplomatic power 30,*

*charm is 5, leadership is uncertain. He is a rude fellow who said that I am not cute. In order to wash this disgrace off, I shall raise an army in the capital and take this punk's head!*

By the way, since Yoshiharu did not peek at Iehisa's diary, he did not know of the content inside it.

Iehisa declared, *Kill! Yoshiharu is dangerous!* However.

*"Heee. So the girls of Satsuma say things like, "Nya nya." It sounds cute."*

*"... Wa..."*

Iehisa blushed in surprise and pouted her lips, *You should have said that from the beginning.* She wrote off the dangerous comment in her diary with a black ink.

And then she secretly wrote something again in the blank space.

*Got a little misunderstanding. This man boldly said that I am cute and laughed cheerfully. His frivolousness is like Genji's.*

The strongest war machine ever born in the Shimazu family—Shimazu Iehisa's capacity to bring casualties on the battlefield was considered as the top during the Sengoku period. In fact, she prided herself for having the biggest abnormality in the history of Japan's military records.

*"This is Shimazu Iehisa-chan. The gap between her innocent and her awe inspiring figures coupled with her warm and snug Satsuma dialect is extremely cute."* In other words, Yoshiharu who had narrowly escaped from death did not realize the things that would have come to him.

*"No, you don't need to say it twice."*

At that time, Yoshiharu's disposition of having fondness with girls had just saved his life and Kyoto.

*"Sagara. There aren't much days that have passed since then, and yet I feel so much nostalgia."*

*"Indeed. Although I never thought that I would meet you again as a prisoner of the Shimazu Clan."*

*"Compared to the past, I have become more skillful in using Honshu dialect."*

*"Really?"*

*“Yes! However, I have liked to read the Tale of Genji ever since then. But we are preoccupied with war that has become so busy. It’s too harsh. My girly heart has slowly dried up.”*

Although Iehisa was scared and nervous in front of Toshihisa, she became her usual self when she was alone together with Yoshiharu.

*This is good,* Yoshiharu inadvertently laughed.

*“Is that so? It was Iehisa who had devised the Tsuru no Buse tactic. This the first time I have received such a decisive defeat among my experiences of military defeat. Although you are still a child, you are indeed a genius of war.”*

*“Nyaa. You were defeated by Saika Magoichi at Tennoji. You were pulverized by Oda Nobuna’s Tekkosen at Kizugawaguchi. You got arrested as Date Masamune’s captive when you led the Takeda cavalry at the Kanto region. You were repelled by Uesugi Kenshin at Tedorigawa. Even with your successive failures, you’ve still managed to win somehow, Sagara. Hahaha!”*

*“If you think about it, maybe it is true. But I still have a way to go compared to Tokichiro-jiisan, who is the greatest Sengoku warlord—Toyotomi Hideyoshi.”* Yoshiharu scratched his head.

*“I hope you can stop my wedding with Yoshihi tomorrow. There is a reason for that.”*

*“... W-Well. Maybe you won’t accept the wedding unless the partner is me? That, that, I am just saying that, because, maybe you thought that way... So... Uum...”*

*“Actually, if I were to marry Yoshihi, I will disappear from this world.”*

*“Nyaa nyaa. What?”*

*“What do you mean?”* Iehisa was puzzled by what Yoshiharu had said, and he began to explain it in detail.

*“Sagara Yoshihi is Yoshiharu’s ancestor?”*

*“When the ancestor and descendant join together, their child will become the ancestor. This will destroy the world’s order. I think, in the future, it will be called as the law of causality? Therefore, the descendant shall be cleared from this world. Which is to say, me.”*

*“Was it the cause of why Sagara fainted and almost vanished back then?”*

*“When I fought against the Shimazu army, I had resolved to die without regret. But in this case, my existence and the things that I have done will disappear. I will disappear from*

*everyone's memory. I will regret it if that were to happen. That is because everything that I have done during the Sengoku period will disappear."*

*"I don't want that!"* Iehisa was screaming, trembling.

*"Sagara. I was under your care back at Kyoto. I think of you as my best friend. This time, I will protect you, Sagara."*

*"Thank you! Konoe-jissan is willing to persuade Yoshihisa and Yoshihiro. There's some problem regarding the method he is using, but I want you to forgive him for it since we don't have time. If Iehisa is willing to help me, will you persuade Toshihisa together with me? So that we can barely complete it in time?"*

As soon as she heard about Toshihisa's name, Iehisa's shoulders shook a little, *"Buku,"* and she lowered her eyes.

*"To think that Iehisa would display this frightened look,"* Yoshiharu couldn't believe what he had seen.

*"... Toshihisa-nee detests me. I shouldn't appear in front of her, so-"*

*"Toshihisa hates you? That should not be true. You worry too much. Toshihisa may have a foul mouth, but she cares a lot about her family and you, Iehisa. You would understand it if you talk to her. That reminds, it's funny that all of the four sisters look so alike. Everyone's gaze resembles a hawk's sharp eyes, haha."*

*"... It's different. Toshihisa-nee, she has never once praised my effort today. I thought that I would be praised because my Tsuru no Buse tactic was successful and managed to defeat the Ito Clan. I am a person who only knows of things about war. But now, I don't understand how I am supposed to continue my efforts. Even though I keep doing my best, Toshihisa-nee keeps scolding me... Uuu... Hic-!"*

At that time, Yoshiharu forgot that he was about to vanish from existence.

It was an impact that was so great; as if his heart were shot by a Tanegashima.

Right at that minute, Iehisa hugged her small figure and crouched down, as if she wanted to hide from something.

*It must be a lie. I can't believe my eyes.*

Yoshiharu gently put his hands on Iehisa's thin shoulders which seemed to be ready to break anytime.

*"Iehisa. It's alright. What on earth has happened? Can you tell me about it?"*

*“... It’s something that happened during my childhood. Sagara, I shouldn’t talk about this now.”*

*“No, I am fine. How could I ask for something like, “Please save my life,” when a girl is crying in front of me?”*

And besides.

There was something that Yoshiharu did not tell Iehisa

Iehisa didn’t know about it now, and neither did Toshihisa.

In the history that Yoshiharu knew, the youngest among the Shimazu Four Brothers—Shimazu Iehisa—died earlier than the rest of his brothers.

He passed away when he was still young and left many brilliant military feats in the history of the Sengoku period by rushing to battle after battles.

Furthermore, his cause of death is unknown. Some says that he died due to poisoning or a sudden illness.

However, there is one thing that is true. Iehisa who had successfully completed the deadly Shimazu tactic *Tsuri no Buse* kept on continuing his advances and yet, in the end, he couldn’t unify Kyushu.

They couldn’t defeat their sworn enemy—the Otomo Clan.

It happened just as they had advanced northward in order to defeat the Otomo Clan.

At the last moment, “the one who reigned over the whole country” came over from Honshu. It was not Oda Nobunaga who fell down in Honnou-ji. Instead, it was Kinoshita Tokichirou who took over the Oda Clan’s administration as Toyotomi Hideyoshi.

Iehisa completely crushed Toyotomi’s vanguard division at the Battle of Hetsugigawa. He also killed Chosokabe Nobuchika and Sogo Masayasu, and many other famous generals. But when Hideyoshi’s large main army swarmed over Kyushu, many powerful clan leaders began their revolt all at once. Because it was impossible to maintain the frontlines, and because they were unable to bring out a decisive battle, they were pressed with the option to withdraw.

As appeals to withdraw from the war kept increasing, the Shimazu Clan finally surrendered to Hideyoshi. Iehisa turned himself in at Hideyoshi’s camp.

Immediately after that, Iehisa suddenly died.

There was no one who could understand his cause of death. Some says that he was poisoned by Hideyoshi. However, knowledge of medicine during the Sengoku period wasn't developed enough to substantiate the suspicion of poisoning.

Yoshiharu believed that the girl in front of him—Iehisa—had a different fate from the genius military commander, Shimazu Iehisa. She was cheerful and very young. He thought that there couldn't be such an unfortunate ending in Iehisa's future.

But right now, the Iehisa who was devoted to battles and devised a suicidal tactic.

And the look of Iehisa who was crying and scared of not being loved by Toshihisa.

And for the first time for Yoshiharu, the two figures of Iehisa began to overlap.

The death of Iehisa was full of mysteries. Even after seeing Hideyoshi's large army approaching before his own eyes, he still remained to end his battle. Such was the way of Iehisa's life.

The earnest wish to unify Kyushu was immediately torn apart after his miserable death.

Yoshiharu secretly thought that Iehisa's fear for her elder sister had left a scar in her heart.

In order to receive praises from her elder sisters, and to have their love, Iehisa put her life to fight in battles—and so, she tormented herself with that thought.

*If I did not meet Iehisa at the capital, if I were unrelated to that battle, if I do not know that Iehisa is a girl who loves the idea of being in love, I might've prioritized my survival first. But Iehisa is my friend, thus I can't abandon her.*

*"Do you intend to gather the truth once again in the last moment of your life?"*

*I feel like being scolded by Goemon this time, but perhaps Goemon would unexpectedly laugh at me instead.*

*"Iehisa. It's alright if you don't want to talk about it. Tonight, I will stay with you."*

*"Even though Sagara's life is weakening as it is now, you are still willing to listen to my problem?"* Iehisa responded tearfully.

*"Yes. Don't worry about that. I am more worried about you than myself. I entrust all of my circumstances to Konoe-jiisan"*

*"Nyaa. I will say it quickly. Once I finish, quickly forget about it and go to Toshihisa-nee to convince her in annulling your wedding,"* Iehisa sniffed.

*“Ok. I promise you that. Now, clean up your nose.”*

*“... Sniff.”*

When Yoshiharu gently stroked Iehisa’s head, she finally calmed down.

And she began to talk.

*“... Toshihisa-nee. She detests the blood that runs through my veins.”*

*“Blood? Aren’t all you sisters related by blood?”*

*“Sagara, I want you to keep this a secret. My mother is different from my three elder sisters’ mother. It might be possible that I am the child of my father’s favorite concubine. By all rights and tradition, those kinds of children should be taken out as an adopted child by another family. Just like in the story of Hikaru Genji, any child who was born from a low-ranked mother must be removed from the imperial family.”*

## Part 3

During the Sengoku period, the Shimazu Clan constantly warred against the opposing other clans.

The grandfather of the four sisters—Shimazu Jisshinsai—is the forefather of the Shimazu Clan. He is the first person in the history of Japan who obtained the weapon called *arquebus* and its production method.

The father of the four sisters—Shimazu Takahisa—saw that the Tripartite Unification of the Shimazu Clan’s former territories—Satsuma, Osumi, and Hyuuga—was close at hand.

Although the Shimazu was a prestigious clan, they had been in turmoil for long years due to the family’s internal discord.

Therefore, Jisshinsai who was an excellent educator instead of a samurai zealously preached and educated his heir Takahisa as well as his grandchildren, the Four Sisters, about the importance of familial unity.

It was similar to Mori Motonari who prepared the anecdote of the “Three Arrows” in order to teach the 3 siblings of Mori about the importance of familial unity. Especially for the Shimazu Clan whose history was filled with many internal discords. For this reason, Jisshinsai paid more attention and effort in educating the four sisters.

He taught them to respect each other’s individuality and raised their respective special characteristics while criticizing their flaws.

Jisshinsai regarded the four sisters as thus.

For the eldest sister, Shimazu Yoshihisa – “possesses the virtue of benevolence and the talent to become the supreme commander of the three states.”

For the 2<sup>nd</sup> sister, Shimazu Yoshihiro – “possesses outstanding bravery.”

For the 3<sup>rd</sup> eldest sister, Shimazu Toshihisa – “possesses unparalleled ability in devising clever stratagems from beginning to their end.”

For the youngest sister, Shimazu Iehisa – “possesses prowess in military tactics.”

And so, it was the truth.

Yoshihisa, Yoshihiro, and Toshihisa. Each of them respectively filled the role as the general, managed the military affairs as the Valkyrie, and was in charge of being the strategist in devising schemes and plots.

However, Iehisa was the only one whose talent couldn't catch up with her growth in comparison to the other three sisters.

In order to teach military arts to the very young Iehisa, Niuro Musashi was selected to be her home tutor. Despite having such an appearance like an ogre child's, her heart was pure like a maiden's. Perhaps it might've been caused by the fact that such a refined person like her was rare in Satsuma.

Niuro Musashi thought that Iehisa was a cute girl. He thought that it wasn't good for the future of the young princess to be filled with only knowledge of savage war tactics. Therefore, aside from teaching her war tactics, he also lectured her of the *Tale of Genji* which would later become her hobby.

Rumors about Iehisa, "*The bad hobby of the youngest daughter of the Shimazu family,*" began to gradually circulate throughout the clan.

At a certain day.

The four sisters were given a vacation by their father Takahisa to have fun riding horses together.

And then an incident occurred.

The three elder sisters were able to ride their favorite horses gracefully, but the young Iehisa was not good at horsemanship, and because the horse was too big, she nearly fell often.

"Nyaa nyaa!"

"Are you alright, Iehisa-chan?"

"My younger sister, it's embarrassing."

Iehisa inadvertently shed tears, "Uuu," when her respected onee-samas, Yoshihisa and Yoshihiro, had merrily laughed at her.

The eldest sister, Yoshihisa, was about to say something to Iehisa but she was lost for a word due to some reason.

At that time, the 3<sup>rd</sup> eldest sister, Toshihisa who was known for her foul mouth looked at Iehisa who was struggling in her horseback riding and suddenly murmured in rapid speed.

"It can't be helped. The horse that Iehisa is using came from a different mother from that of the horses we are using. It is the same thing as humans'. Even though it is only one of the sisters who has bad quality, it isn't necessary to worry about it, Iehisa."

Therefore, Iehisa was scared of Toshihisa from the moment she heard these words.

She absolutely did not want to hear those words.

Among the four sisters, only three were the daughters of Takahisa's legal wife.

However, only the young Iehisa was different.

It was after Yoshihisa had grown older that Iehisa was born from a concubine.

Therefore, Iehisa's talent was far immature compared to the three elder sisters.

Her body was also small, and it couldn't be compared to Yoshihisa's and Yoshihiro's.

Her sister was already out in the battlefield and active as a princess general, yet Iehisa who was still at her toddler age still liked to play.

She thought that it was more fun to listen to the stories of love from the capital rather than to be lectured about war tactics.

Iehisa felt incongruity for being counted as one of the Shimazu 4 Sisters for a long time.

*Yoshihisa-nee's birth is different from mine. However, I love mother. But perhaps the reason why my ability is poor compared to the others is because the blood of the Shimazu running through my veins is thinner.*

Iehisa was a very sensitive young girl. Holding that doubt, she became frightened when some retainer accused her of something.

But she thought that it was impossible, since she never heard her true elder sisters saying something like that. Because she believed that even if they had different mothers, her elder sisters still doted on her as a younger sister.

But it was only a delusion.

In reality, she thought that she was not loved by her sisters.

Her heart still young, she received a scar that would remain for the rest of her life.

And when she noticed it, Iehisa had already been crying on horseback.

There was no sound. Her throat was frozen with fear from the impact, thus she couldn't raise her voice.

She knew that her face had gradually become pale.

It was not even possible for her to breathe.

*"... Iehisa?"*

Toshihisa saw something terrible when she looked at Iehisa.

Yoshihiro led her horse and rushed to Iehisa, *“What’s wrong, Iehisa? Take a deep breath,”* and stroked her back.

*“... Uuh... Uuh...”* But Iehisa was still trembling on the horseback and stopped breathing. In panic, Yoshihiro gently hit her back with her palm.

*“Cough... Cough...”*

*“Iehisa! Take a deep breath!”*

Yoshihisa was stunned when she watched this spectacle. After a moment of hesitation, she made her determination and opened her mouth.

In tears, she scolded Toshihisa severely.

*“Neither be it horses or humans, everything can’t be determined by blood alone! Iehisa is still our younger sister, Toshihisa! Please apologize to Iehisa!”*

*“... I was wrong. I said too much. Just forget what I have said today, Iehisa.”*

However, Iehisa would never be able to erase her fear for Toshihisa.

Rather than her fear for Toshihisa in person, *“My mother is different from theirs; my lineage is different from my sisters’,”* Iehisa’s mind had been disillusioned by her inferiority complex and the feeling of indebtedness.

After the horse riding incident, Iehisa changed and now devoted herself to study military knowledge.

The four sisters never talked about that incident to another person afterwards.

*“Grandfather Jisshinsai told me that I was gifted in military arts and tactics. In that case, I shall live for the sake of battle and die for battle as well; all for our cherished Shimazu Clan’s dream of Sanshu Unification [Tripartite Unification], achieved through military might. If that’s the case, I will surely get praised by Toshihisa-nee. From that day, I have been determined to do so.”*

In the *Tsuri no Buse*, the general should be the decoy to the enemies with 10 times the amount of their own. Such tactic was born from Iehisa’s single-minded intention for an honorable defeat. The premise of *“to fight and die for the Shimazu Clan”* was also born from that, Yoshiharu understood for the first time.

*“I really see my elder sisters as my own. I have to repay their kindness. The only talent that I have is to wage wars and win them. And so, in order to not lose any moment in the battlefield, I’ve made these as military tribunal laws: “A soldier who has retreated from the*

*battlefield shall receive capital punishment,” and, “Those who couldn’t take the neck of an enemy shall also be met with death penalty.” For these, I devised the honorable die-in-action tactic, Tsuru no Buse. I have a determination that if I, the general, fails then I shall take responsibility and die in the battlefield. But...”*

*Toshihisa-nee does not acknowledge it.*

*“It is not permitted that the Shimazu children who have just come to their age [debuted] die a meaningless death by taking position on such a crude, honorable-death tactic, the Tsuru no Buse.” She severely scolded Iehisa.*

*If I don’t think of any measure to disturb the enemy formation beforehand, then the tactic couldn’t be completed.*

*When I aimed to become the army general, Yoshihiro-nee stopped me.*

*“You are still immature. This role does not fit you unless it were me.”*

*But even she still had used the tactic, and the Shimazu Clan was able to crush the Ito Clan. Iehisa thought that she would surely get praised by Toshihisa. But it was nothing but a pipe dream.*

*A lot of samurais of both sides at Kizakihara died for my tiny, wishful dream. It was all because of Tsuru no Buse. I do not know what to do anymore. Is unifying the three states not enough? Will Toshihisa-nee compliment me if I manages to unify all of Kyushu instead? Would I finally be able to be loved?*

*How long should I fight? How much blood must be shed in both sides? No matter how much I fight, I still can’t change the blood that flows inside my body. If I can change this blood of mine then I would surely be their younger sister. Then at the very least, let me die fighting. If I die fighting for the Shimazu Clan then perhaps I would be acknowledged by my sisters as their real younger sister.*

*Iehisa was suppressing her voice, crying.*

*Yoshiharu gently hugged Iehisa’s small body.*

*In history, Iehisa worked himself to continue fighting. Yet, the dream of unifying the whole Kyushu was just like a bubble that easily disappears; furthermore, his life would be the first to end among the Four Brothers.*

*The reason is the blood that runs through Iehisa. It’s because she thinks that she is not loved by her sisters due to her bloodline, Yoshiharu thought so.*

*“Sagara...”*

*“Yes. I’ve heard it. All the things that you want to say, but can’t, you have said it all now.”*

*“I don’t bear grudge against Toshihisa-nee. I also do not resent Yoshihiro-nee who refused to send me to the battlefield. But I want to be useful to my sisters. With their love. I want to be recognized as one of the Shimazu Sisters. Therefore, even if military art is disregarded in the future decisive battle against the Otomo Clan, I shall come out as the vanguard and charge ahead to die as a decoy. If I don’t, I can no longer face the subordinates who’ve lost their lives as decoys for my Tsuru no Buse tactic at Kizakihara.”*

*“Don’t be rash to die, Iehisa. It is easy for someone to die in this Sengoku era. Wouldn’t you regret dying without being loved by your elder sisters? You will surely regret it at the last moment of your life.”*

*“... But. There is nothing I can do about my origin.”*

*“Things like blood lineage do not matter at all. Look at me. I am a person from the future who has a suspicious family background. I’ve lived and even risen to the position of a commander of the Oda Clan with only my meager knowledge from the future and by living bravely as well as using dirty bluffs. I’ve received the honorary court office of Chikuzen-no-Kami from the Imperial Palace. I have purposes. And I’ve fallen in love with the ruler of the world, Nobuna.”*

*“Blood relation has nothing to do with a human being, and it is neither necessary nor meaningful too. The one who decides your life is your own will. It is decided by your own actions. Therefore, not even your elder sisters would differentiate you from others. Believe in your sisters.”*

*“Iehisa. The thing that troubles you is not about your elder sisters. It is your mind which has been plagued by the problem of your lineage.”*

*“It’s different.”*

*“It is not different. I understand it. Because, if you are talking about lineage, then I am placed at the lowest echelon in this Sengoku era. Well, my ancestor came from Kyushu, so my position has changed a bit. At some point, I even had thoughts of leaving Nobuna’s side. It’s because, I would be responsible for all the bad reputations surrounding Nobuna, if I were to keep standing next to her side. But I’ve decided that I won’t run away again. Nobuna has said that things like blood lineage and social standing don’t matter to me. Even your elder sisters should think the same.”*

Iehisa finally looked up and matched her gaze with Yoshiharu’s.

*“Aah. Sagara. Your visage matches that of Hikaru Genji’s, although your face still looks like a monkey’s.”*

*“I don’t think that I look like a monkey that much.”*

*“... Sagara. Actually, I am really...”*

*“Really what?”*

Blushing, Iehisa muttered.

*“... I want to fall in love, even if it’s just for a day, before I die...”*

*“Then didn’t you come to the capital for sightseeing? To go around the holy land that is the stage of the Tale of Genji. There is a lecture about the Tales of Genji if we visit Shimogamo Shrine at Mt. Kurama.”*

*“It was fun!”*

*“Iehisa, because you don’t understand a thing about tea ceremonies, let’s ask Juubei-chan for a reception and hot tea.”*

*“Yeah, now, I somewhat like tea now.”* [Yes, she repeated “now” once]

*“You’ve finally cheered up. I’m going to meet Toshihisa now. I will find out the truth about the horse riding incident properly. I’m sure that there was a misunderstanding between you and Toshihisa.”*

*“Nyaa nyaa? Even though Sagara has free time, I feel reluctant too. But if Sagara disappears, I would be sad.”*

Gyuu, Iehisa hugged Yoshiharu tightly.

Iehisa was still a young princess general of the Shimazu Clan. Despite having a small and delicate body, she was unexpectedly strong.

Yoshiharu who couldn’t escape felt embarrassed.

*“Woah, wait a minute. Won’t you let me go? My time is getting shorter by the minute.”*

*“Compared to me, Sagara must do everything to stop the marriage ceremony. Promise me that. If you don’t, I won’t let you get out from this room.”*

*“Yes. I understand. I promise.”*

Even if he'd meet Toshihisa, she'd just reply curtly, *"Regardless whether you will disappear or not, it does not matter to me."* But Yoshiharu thought that he would still be able to keep his promise.

*"What? Stop the wedding ceremony tomorrow morning? Of course not. Your strange conjecture that you will disappear or not does not matter to me. To begin with, I can't understand the reason wherefore you will disappear if you marry Sagara Yoshihi. Anyway, isn't this just a cheap trick to postpone the wedding? That Sagara Yoshihi is really a cunning vixen. If you want to disappear then do it on your own accord."*

Her reaction was as expected. The talk was over in 3 minutes. Yoshiharu wore a wry smile as he received a tea.

He was currently at Toshihisa's bedroom.

Rubbing her drowsy eyes, Toshihisa prepared a second cup of tea, along the way grinding her teeth. [According to Mario-san, this case isn't deliberate, but mere bruxism.]

*"Unless you are Konoe Sakihisa-sama's friend, this would've been regarded as a case where a monkey has intruded into a maiden's bedroom at night. I totally do not understand at all. What is Oda Nobuna thinking? Mixing Konoe-sama's exalted lineage with a monkey. The fact that you are saying that you are a descendant of a distinguished clan—Sagara Yoshihi's descendant—is already a fishy story. Indeed, this is just an excuse to marry Oda Nobuna."*

*"Well then. This is the real main subject. If possible, I don't want you to talk about blood relations in front of Iehisa."*

Toshihisa greatly panicked.

She dropped the cup in her hands.

*"W-Why do you want to discuss a matter about Iehisa?"*

*"I have heard about the horse incident."*

*"From whom? From whom have you heard about it? Was it from Iehisa? Because you can't persuade with your reasoning that you've resorted on using this dirty trick? Such a cowardly play."*

*"Eh? I did not come here to seduce you."*

*"That's a lie! Before this, an impostor who claimed himself as Konoe Sakihisa infiltrated the castle. In fact, of all things, he crawled to the obstinate Yoshihiro-nee's bedroom and was beaten half dead! That impostor also tried to deceive Yoshihiro-nee to abort Sagara Yoshiharu's wedding! Isn't he your accomplice?"*

*“So, every means to extend my life has been exhausted,” Yoshiharu sighed.*

*“... Haa, Konoe-jiisan... Even if he has changed to a completely different man, he thinks too highly of himself... Perhaps it was also because Yoshihiro was too serious...”*

*“That fake has completely fainted; he won’t wake up until morning. He seems to be a master of the Kashima-Shinto-Ryu Style, but he is no match to Yoshihiro-nee’s Taisha-Ryu style that she learned in the battlefield. It is quite plausible that the impostor is not an influential person. But the mystery of the Kashima-Shinto-Ryu Style—was the fact that when the sword was unsheathed, Yoshihiro-nee seemed to be in danger.”*

*“Furthermore, it was supposed to be a contest of love, and yet it’d turned into a sword duel? Well, it’s to be expected from Yoshihiro that the situation turned into this. But, Konoe-jiisan would draw his sword if he meant to seriously kill someone... But since he is trying to persuade her, it would be meaningless to kill her... But, considering how much of a master swordsman Yoshihiro is, I think it would be impossible for the enemy to surpass her.”*

*“Although Konoe-jiisan is strong, he is too rash when it comes to making judgment. If only he is similar to a true wise man like Iwakura Tomomi, then it could be guaranteed that Konoe’s administration could be realized. But it couldn’t be helped, so Konoe-jiisan, it’s better if you take a long sleep,” Yoshiharu clapped his hands in prayer.*

*With this, I am more and more trapped in a checkmate. And now, it is impossible for me to leave Iehisa’s wound to make an excuse in begging Toshihisa for my life. Anyway, it is impossible for Toshihisa’s and Iehisa’s opinions to match unless they reconcile. With this going on, then I wouldn’t be saved.*

*Yoshiharu drank his tea in one gulp and said, “Second please.”*

*“This is a good opportunity for you to know this, Sagara Yoshiharu. I devote all of my ingenuity to achieve Sanshu Pacification and Kyushu domination. I cannot be infatuated for something like love, so just go back.”*

*“Yoshihisa and Yoshihiro seem to have been eager in searching for a husband for you?”*

*“Those two are being careless because they have bountiful breasts and feminine bodies! Because they think that it would not be hard for them to find a husband compared to me.”*

*“No, wait. Why are you devoting yourself in your ingenuity for the sake of the Shimazu Clan to that extent? From a different perspective, this is similar to Iehisa’s obligation for her blood lineage.”*

*“T-That was. Because I have said such heartless things and driven Iehisa to become a battle maniac... No, that is not true! Everything is because of my flat chest! Anything could be wrong with this flat chest of mine! The men of Satsuma have always been gazing upon my two*

*onee-samas' rich breasts! For what reason is mine smaller than the younger Iehisa's? Why? Won't mine bulge in the same way as Sakurajima's eruption?"*

Yoshiharu found a possibility behind Toshihisa's bewildered expression.

Toshihisa did not intend to hate Iehisa. There was some resentment about breasts. But that was a grudge that every maiden would have. But it had nothing to do with Iehisa as an individual.

*"You regret the statements that you said back then during the horse riding incident?"*

*"Please don't say it as if you know everything, you rude man! What do you know? You and I have just met today!"*

*"But, Iehisa and I were originally friends. She is an honest girl with a hectic disposition. She couldn't possibly be hated by her onee-samas. In other words-"*

*"Hold your tongue! I do not regret the fact that I scolded Iehisa! It is my responsibility as an elder sister that we have to struggle in order to force knowledge of martial arts and tactics to my incompetent younger sister! The tactic that she devised positioned her on the frontlines to kill the enemy. Such tactic is nothing more than putting oneself in great danger. If such tactic were to be used, you would be killed immediately and thus be not qualified as a good general."*

*"You're worried about Iehisa's safety"*

*"It's different! I did not say that I don't want Iehisa to die in battle particularly. If I don't put my hands in filling their shortcomings, that absurd tactic Tsuru no Buse won't be completed. At that time, I tried to force the Sagara army to change their movement by giving them false information because Tsuru no Buse uses small decoys in order to lure their enemy to annihilation. That tactic will be invalid once they are cornered in a pincer attack between their enemies and allies."*

*"But even though I've seen through your false information due to my future knowledge, the Shimazu Clan still managed to win, right?"*

*"It's because Yoshihiro-nee is an extraordinary Takegami! If you replaced the general with Iehisa, she would be killed by the Sagara army. Your action was too uncalled for! Just go and disappear already!"*

*"Well then, let's talk regarding the argument back then during the horse incident. I am about to disappear tomorrow in the wedding anyway."*

*"... What a ridiculous man. Rather than begging for your life, you are more worried about Iehisa's trouble."*

According to what Toshihisa reluctantly said, the truth about the horse incident was caused by nothing but Toshihisa's own personal feelings that were vehemently dissented.

It was a well-known fact that during those days, Iehisa had been a bad younger sister with romantic hobbies.

The day before the horse riding event of the four sisters, Toshihisa and Yoshihisa had a little argument.

*"If this goes on, Iehisa will become a useless princess. It is necessary to force her to contemplate about herself,"* Toshihisa argued about it.

But Yoshihisa said, *"Iehisa is still a child, we should observe her in the long run;"* she was being generous to Iehisa.

Toshihisa wasn't convinced, *"Even though I am also a younger sister, my onee-samas always spoil Iehisa."*

In the first place, it was worthy of note that the younger Iehisa had better breasts. [Quality > quantity]

*Even though I share the same blood with my two onee-samas, my chest is flat. Is Iehisa who has a different mother more important to my onee-samas because her chest is similar to theirs?*

It was said that that dissatisfaction had suddenly sprouted at that time.

But it turned out to be alright now. Iehisa's interest for warfare had been awoken, and she began to work in the same fashion as the other sisters of the Shimazu Clan.

*"First of all, Iehisa's mother is different from ours, and that is an indisputable fact. Even if she is depressed about it, it is not something that I can understand. In the world of Shuras, Kyushu, a spoiled princess can't live without willpower. Because of Yoshihisa-nee's gentle nature, she can't educate Iehisa, and Yoshihiro-nee is too generous. Therefore, it is up to me to play the bad guy role to speak out harsh words. It has come to such extent that I want to thank Iehisa for it."*

*"But. Even though that theory could be understood from a human standpoint, I still feel sorry for Iehisa. Iehisa has been scared of you since that day. Won't you apologize to Iehisa and reconcile with her?"*

*"I refuse."*

*"Why?"*

*“What would you do if Iehisa’s lazy habits show up again? It is alright if she hates me; because I’ve taken the role of the bad guy. If the clan head Yoshihisa-nee gets hated, it would cause many problems. She wants to be the wickedest clan head in the Sengoku era. But it would be impossible for her to do it in the first place. Yoshihiro-nee’s disposition also makes it impossible for her to play the bad guy role.”*

*“Iehisa does not hate you. She just wants to be loved by you.”*

*“... ”*

Toshihisa lowered her head for a while, whilst stroking the tea cup she had in her hands.

Yoshiharu was waiting.

Toshihisa’s story sounded plausible, but there was contradiction.

*The horse riding to count, it should’ve happened when the four sisters’ father—Shimazu Takahisa—was still alive. Even if she is a genius, it should take some time for the young Iehisa’s talent to bloom; it is not something that could be said to have happened recently. And because Iehisa was still a child at that time, her breasts shouldn’t have grown yet.* [The Oppai God is magnanimous to both the children and adults. Thou shan’t forget that edict.]

In addition, the expression that Toshihisa had when she reprimanded Iehisa was not a happy one. It wasn’t apparent that the elder sister felt dark delight in abusing her younger sister. In fact, it looked as if Toshihisa herself was pained every time she abused Iehisa.

*“... You are so foolish, Sagara Yoshiharu. You want to mediate between me and Iehisa? It’s too much. Won’t you disappear once you marry Yoshihi?”*

*“Of course, I don’t want to disappear, but I have seen Iehisa’s crying face. I can’t leave her alone. There isn’t much time I have left, anyway. Furthermore, I can’t imagine that you will agree on Iehisa’s opinion to cancel my wedding. Right now, your condition with her is like mutual wariness to an opponent.”*

*“I’m not scared of Iehisa,”* Toshihisa muttered resentfully.

*“It seems that you’ve overestimated me. I am a woman who is too preoccupied in expanding the Shimazu Clan’s territory. It has come to such extent that I have no choice but to maltreat my incompetent younger sister. I have said this before: today is the first time I’ve met you. Do not judge what kind of personality I have on your own accord.”*

*“No. I know what kind of princess general you are. Your future. Because your memory of me will fade once I disappear, I will tell you your future.”*

*“Stop. Don’t tell me my future.”*

*“Shimazu Toshihisa. Your future is exactly as you’ve imagined. The same thing goes for Iehisa’s.”*

*“ ... ”*

*“There is an obstinate factor that plays a great role in fate. However, there is also an inevitable conclusion in your destiny caused by your own will and actions. Although you may have some expectations because you are the most resourceful general in the Shimazu Clan, but in the future I know, the Shimazu Clan couldn’t unify Kyushu in time. The Sengoku Era is rapidly approaching its end. A person who reigns in power over the whole country will appear in Honshu. Even with the men of Satsuma’s Hayato, there would be no way to face this opponent with strategies and tactics. And so, the earnest wish of the Shimazu Clan will perish as a dream. And so, Iehisa will-”*

*“Stop! If you say further, I will kill you!”*

*“Iehisa, she died earlier than the rest of the Four Sisters.”*

*“Please! Don’t say anymore! I don’t want to listen!”*

Toshihisa opened her eyes wide, thereafter covering her ears as if she had been possessed by fear.

*I forcibly told her the future. Although it’s a little rough, but all of this disgusting conversation will disappear from Toshihisa’s memory once I disappear. Only this time that I will permit it. I don’t think that I am being conceited... But as expected, I do not want to disappear.*

*If I disappear, the only person who knows the future of Japan’s Sengoku era will be Gaspard. Will anyone respect Gaspard’s way of interfering with the fates of the princess generals through their hearts? Amongst all, won’t the four Shimazu sisters be regarded as the most formidable obstacle to Gaspard’s ambition?*

*It is wrong.*

*I will withdraw my previous statement.*

*I want to survive, as expected.*

*When I look at Shimazu Toshihisa’s clear tears, my regret resurfaces*

*Since it will be the end of Shimazu Toshihisa’s life.*

*“Sagara Yoshiharu! Why are your eyes filled with pity? Shut up! Is it my fault? That miserable future happened because I cornered and abused that child; is that what you want to say?”*

*“I’m not saying that. I respect you. I don’t feel any pity. You are a person who will carry all crimes on the back alone and commit seppuku in order to protect the sisters of Shimazu.”*

*“Me? In order to bear the sins of my sister, I committed seppuku? I’m not a fool! I, if I live, I can make up many schemes! It won’t be possible for me to protect the Shimazu Clan if I die!”*

*“No. For the sake of your sisters, you would commit seppuku. Shimazu Toshihisa is such a person.”*

*“... Such cowardice. To speak out things like that to me!”*

*“I’m sorry. But maybe during that horse incident. You want to protect someone. But because you did not want to wound other people except yourself, you decided to bear all of the crimes and be the victim.”*

*“If you’ve said it to this extent. Sagara Yoshiharu! Among the Shimazu 4 Sisters—is there anyone left to live in this world of Shura?”*

*“Ah. You were saved. With your life in exchange. You were a wise person who assumed the grudge of the one who reigned over the whole country to yourself on purpose. At the end, you committed seppuku in order to protect the Shimazu Clan.”*

*“But... Still, Iehisa... That child is...”*

Yoshiharu told this, as he tried to conceal the pain of his heart.

*“Iehisa’s end, as she remained afraid of you. She passed away much earlier than you...”*

Toshihisa gasped involuntarily.

Her body shook, little by little.

She couldn’t afford to continue acting the role of an elder sister to her stupid younger sister anymore.

*“I am fine... But Iehisa, that child... Somehow, for Iehisa... I’m not capable... But a person from the future like you could...”*

*“I’ve always tried to shift the situation to my advantage somehow. But reality is a harsh thing. Even the outcome of the Battle of Kizakihara couldn’t be changed by me. My power amounts to only that of one man. With me alone, I can’t change someone’s future. I need help from others.”*

One of the reasons why Toshihisa believed in Yoshiharu's foresight was because he knew that the shinobi that had been sent to the Sagara army before the Battle of Kizakihara was a fake. The result was that the Sagara army managed to rush over and flank the Shimazu army.

Toshihisa's heart nearly stopped when she heard that her schemes were seen through by the Sagara army.

The person who had seen through it was the man from the future – Sagara Yoshiharu.

It was said that Yoshiharu saw through it not because of his intelligence, but because he had knowledge of the future.

But even Yoshiharu couldn't change destiny so easily.

*"... How... What should I do..."*

Yoshiharu noticed that Toshihisa's frightened expression with upturned eyes was similar to Iehisa's. [The hell with this?]

*"I've gradually understood it. You are not scared of the possibility that Iehisa hates you. As the result of stirring her heart, Iehisa would come to devote herself to warfare to her limit in the future. It's because you are a wise person that you can see through it. But you can't accept it. You didn't want to acknowledge Iehisa's tactic. And so, you revised it. Because you don't want Iehisa to give up her life and fight to death in the battlefield."*

*"If all of your words are a lie, then I won't keep you alive. Now, it is useless to reveal that prophecy to anyone else. But I will kill you immediately if you leak it to anyone beside me,"* Toshihisa bit her lips, glaring at Yoshiharu.

*"I know. It is a bad thing to do. But I will do it only this time because I have no time left."*

*"Sagara Yoshiharu. There is no time to make excuses to me. Now you must gather all of the Shimazu Four Sisters in Yoshihisa-nee's bedroom. Depending on you, the answer which you curiously want to know, will be revealed."*

*"Gather all of the four sisters and reveal the truth about the horse incident?"*

*"Yes. If you leave the other 2 people, then I think Yoshihisa-nee will give the answer immediately. But since you will disappear when the time has run out, all of the four sisters must gather in one place. It will be a gamble. Whether Yoshihisa-nee will have the courage to spill out the truth in front of Iehisa."*

*"Do you believe in Yoshihisa?"*

*“Yes. That is so. She has the virtue to become the supreme ruler of the three states. She is the oldest sister of the Shimazu family. Though I am worried that she likes to make decisions by fortune slips. There is no one else besides her that I know, who has such bravery and magnanimity.”*

Toshihisa who had regained her calm talked about Yoshihisa’s reputation with a proud smile.

*“Once the truth is found out, the cancellation of your wedding ceremony can be requested from Yoshihisa-nee and Yoshihiro-nee. And so, two people should be persuaded. If you manage it in time. You will live.”*

If Yoshiharu resolved the ill feeling that appeared between the sisters during the horse incident, then Yoshihisa and Yoshihiro would withdraw the decision about the wedding to repay his favor. Toshihisa bestowed this wise decision to Yoshiharu.

*“Sagara Yoshiharu, if you don’t hurry then time will run out. Dawn is already approaching.”*

But at the same time, Yoshiharu thought of one person who couldn’t be left out.

*“May I also call Sagara Yoshihi?”*

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Shimazu Yoshihisa’s bedroom look like an “exhibition for the wickedest men.” [Hope she doesn’t do what Yuzuki Kiryu does in her room.]

*“Everyone, welcome! Has my training made me a full-fledged villain? Thank you for coming here to see the treasury of all of the most valuable portraits of the wickedest men.”*

*“What is this? Are you sure this is a bedroom of a maiden? This is such a disgusting room!”* Yoshihi who had been brought over by Yoshiharu frowned.

*This place looks exactly like a kingdom of evil!*

A series of the portraits of abominably wicked men decorated the wall in a row.

All of the 3 sisters of Shimazu except Yoshihisa dislike her bedroom that had been turned into an ominous “wicked men’s exhibition.” All of them uniformly looked dejected.

*“This wall has the portrait of the “Three Evil.” These people are my teachers.”*

*“The first among them is known as the “Infinite Wickedness” in all of Japan. A man who favors the use of gun in assassination. Known for his epithet, “Princess General Killer.” A first-class traitor. Ukita Naoie! He has such a refreshing smile, doesn’t he? He likes to cheat on everybody!”*

*“This one is the “Viper of Mino!” His name is Saito Dosan, who rose up from being an oil merchant of Yamasaki City, by banishing his lord and stealing his concubines, to being the overlord of Mino! When he was young, he was a handsome man. He is an old man who has retired from his extremely heinous, evil looks. It’s fantastic, right? He is such a cool oji-sama, right? Aah, how much I want to become a ruler like him.”*

*“The bird of the “Three Evil.” She is the woman who burned the great Todai-ji of Nara! She attacked the Ashikaga shogunate and brought an end to Muromachi Shogunate! She also poisoned all of the Miyoshi clan lords one by one! She has the biggest amount of achievements throughout the world’s “Three Evil!” She is the evil person who is rumored to have set fire to the remains of Japan’s court, Matsunaga Danjou! Surprisingly, she also possesses an exotic beauty! But, doesn’t her figure look similar to me? These large breasts and intriguing waist seem to tempt men who look at them! This substantiates the fact that I have the talent to become a wicked woman, right? Ooh!”*

As it was impossible to change her elder sister’s unreasonable personality, Yoshihiro who felt troubled coughed her throat.

*“There is the most legendary wicked man in the history of Japan on that wall! He is the enemy of the Imperial Court of Ashikaga Takauji, named as Taira no Masakado! And now, there is the most unique wicked person whom I give special treatment beside my bed, the “Dai-Rokuten Mao—” Oda Nobuna! She destroyed the Enryaku-ji by setting it on fire! She made a golden skull out of the remains of Azai Asakura! She was the one behind the reckless deed of burning down Kamigyo! She faced the Honbyo temple with starvation tactics and huge arquebus battles! The thickness of her wickedness is different from the Shuras of Kyushu, for she keeps severing all honors of battle. In order to become a wicked person, I must follow the example of this general of Honshu.”*

*“My sister is a good person, but she persistently exercises unreasonable training to become a wicked person,” Shimazu Yoshihiro blushed in shame.*

*“They actually don’t want to commit those evil deeds,” Yoshiharu tried to defend them.*

*“Neither Nobuna nor Dousan nor Danjou is actually an evil person... Aside from that fellow Ukita Naoie-jiisan,” Yoshiharu shuddered when he thought about the rumor surrounding him.*

*“Yoshihisa. Since the beginning, Nobuna is fighting for the sake of the people by bringing a new order upon the war in the world where the system of Muromachi Shogunate’s government has rotten. As a result, it has caused a social upheaval among the top and bottom classes of people, and thus they called her evil. But she is never a bad person from the beginning. But of course, the person herself has flaws and troubles, and she is not a saint with a noble character.”*

*“Oh, that is not a good thing to say, Sagara Yoshiharu. The thing is. I yearn to follow her firm will of not being afraid of public reputation. Look at me! I am a timid person. I am indecisive and worried of my reputation from the people. When a battle starts, I can’t decide anything without using fortune slips [fortune cookies, they help]... soon I will transfer the seat of daimyo to the brave Yoshihiro-chan and retire. Once I retire, I shall name myself as the ‘Ryuhaku [Dragon Earl].’”*

*“If Anesha retires then I too shall retire. I am serious!” Yoshihiro suggested that she introduce herself as the “new restoration,” Yoshihisa pouting, “I understand.”*

*“Oh! Mr. Fox who has nothing to do with wickedness is enshrined near the bedside. The Inari-no-Kami [God of Harvest] is deified as the guardian kami of birthplaces.”*

*“It is because the founder of the Shimazu Clan, along with their social standing, had always been guarded by Mr. Fox. The legend told that when a crisis befell the family, the Inari-no-Kami would descend as salvation in the form of a fox to the Shimazu family. Well, it is only an ordinary legend, but I have always brought fried tofu offering to Mr. Fox as a duty of the clan head daily.”*

Yoshiharu recalled the young noble who had the visage of a fox.

*“Fox, is it...? It seems nostalgic.”*

*“Well then, what business do you have for gathering all the Shimazu Four Sisters along with Sagara Yoshihi? Is it to confer in admiring wicked men during the night? Or, is it about the topic that you will disappear if you were to marry Yoshihi at the next morning?”*

*“There is also that, but the most important thing right now is about the horse riding incident. I want you to tell the truth to Iehisa from your own mouth.”*

*“Sagara? Is it not about stopping the wedding? There is no time left to discuss such thing, you know,” Iehisa who was hiding behind Yoshiharu’s back began to be frightened.*

*“It is alright. It’s because Yoshihisa would always tell the truth. I got an approval from Toshihisa.”*

*“Eh. Why are you so desperate in learning Iehisa-chan’s story? Isn’t she unrelated to Sagara Yoshihi and you?”*

*"I have a lot of relationship with her, Yoshihisa. It's because I became a friend and entertained Iehisa back at the capital."*

*"You didn't come to beg for your life? Hasn't Yoshihiro-chan heard of the circumstances?"*

*"I do not believe the word of that fake Konoe-sama at all, but I told Anesha just in case,"* Yoshihiro dutifully folded her arms and nodded.

*"Although I have the disposition of being a meddlesome person who likes to show off. But because I have no more time, this is the fastest way in taking the initiative. This also involves Yoshihi."*

Yoshihi still couldn't accept the story that she and Yoshiharu were respectively an ancestor and a descendant yet.

*"Isn't it too sudden that you call yourself my offspring? To begin with, I have no intention to marry and bear a child. Well, if my partner is Yoshiharu then I can make up the determination to do that,"* Yoshihi was confused.

*"Yoshiharu. What do mean that you will disappear when you marry me? Did you invent such sophistry because you do not want to marry me?"*

*"If it's that then it would've been good, but I am not lying."*

Yoshiharu lifted his right arm which had slowly begun to become transparent and showed it to Yoshihi.

*"Yoshiharu, what is this...? You are beginning to disappear!"*

*"Aah... My body seems to be gradually losing its strength. It seems that the deadline is approaching."*

*"... Is that so? There shouldn't be any relationship between me and you. Is this fate...? As expected, I can't live my own life yet..."*

*"Yoshihi?"*

*"... It's nothing. I am just thinking aloud. There is no time left for you, right? Hurry up, Yoshiharu."*

*"Yoshihisa. Please tell the truth about the horse incident to Iehisa. Tell it from your own mouth who the head of the Shimazu family is."*

Yoshihisa wavered. Though 'twas a short amount of time, she was hesitating on what she should do as the head of the Shimazu family.

Though Yoshiharu's existence was being cornered and ready to disappear anytime, he was still busy in trying to help out whom he'd met at the capital to reconnect her relations with her sisters. Although he'd lost the battle and became the prisoner of the Shimazu clan. He was a softhearted man and far away from being a wicked person. This disposition of Sagara Yoshiharu couldn't be repressed no matter how. But even so, by no means had he the caliber to become a ruler.

*"... I might be similar to you in some aspect. So I am trying to throw away my good-natured character. A retainer might just be okay with it. However, a ruler is pressed to make a choice someday. Now that I am the person who ties the Shimazu Clan together, it will be impossible for me to gain everything. Isn't it just a superficial dream, Sagara Yoshiharu?"*

*"I understand Yoshihisa. It is the destiny of someone who is born a ruler. But please do not sever the feeling Toshihisa is holding for Iehisa. Eventually, a rift will start to form between them."*

*"Rift?"*

Yoshiharu was still engrossed in Iehisa.

*"Just to what extent will your soft heart go?"* Toshihisa was exasperated, and silently confessed to Yoshihisa.

*"Yoshihisa-nee. All of his deeds in the past will disappear when his existence is gone. All of our memories about him will be lost. This is also for the memory about this late tea party right now. If that happens, the future that he has predicted will be fulfilled as well."*

Though it was only a little, Yoshihisa understood it.

A rift was created between Toshihisa and Iehisa, ever since the horse riding incident.

That rift would lead the four sisters of Shimazu to a black future sometime soon.

Perhaps the two people who would be swallowed up in the dark future would be Toshihisa and Iehisa.

*"Sagara Yoshiharu. Forget about the horse riding incident, shouldn't you beg for your life first? Aren't you afraid of death? Aren't you afraid of having your own existence disappear?"*

*"I am not afraid of death. Even if I were to receive a mortal wound, the pain would only last for a moment. But, I am scared of having my existence vanish. I am extremely scared of it. When it happens, all of the footprints that I've left in this Sengoku period will be gone."*

*"Then you should have asked me to cancel your wedding with Sagara Yoshihi."*

*“It’s useless, Yoshihisa. This is the persona that I will never give up. Please bring out the truth about the horse riding incident to Iehisa. That is the most important thing right now.”*

*“Why are you being so stubborn? Aren’t you reversing the order of your priority?”*

*“That is because the matter of that incident won’t be settled if we don’t talk about it now.”*

Yoshihisa served a tea to Yoshiharu.

But, Yoshiharu wasn’t able to hold the tea cup; it’s because both his hands had gone transparent. He wasn’t able to grasp it. The tea cup slipped through Yoshiharu’s palms and fell down to the tatami mat.

*“... Yoshiharu?”*

*“Sagara, your body is starting to disappear!”*

On the other side of the rail. The morning sun had begun to rise behind Sakurajima.

*“... Has morning come at last?”*

Yoshiharu thought that his time had run out.

There was something that felt like it was being cut inside his heart.

The entirety of his body lost all of its strength.

He couldn’t even sit straight anymore.

*“Yoshihi. Listen to me.”*

He could still barely raise his voice.

Yoshihi tried to support Yoshiharu’s back, but she couldn’t touch him. Yoshiharu spoke to her.

*“I’m scared of having the things that I’ve left behind disappear. Even if I die, my dream will be inherited by others. That is why I am not afraid of death. I’m scared of whether that dream will be gone as well. I finally understand the reason why people want to find a companion and bear a child. Although it’s already too late... No matter how many obstacles there will be, I pledge my life [I’ll be blunt; it’s to fuck] to Nobuna so that we can have a child together.”*

Yoshiharu did not want to complain in front of a princess general when he was about to die.

He wanted to die bravely.

However, he thought that he could bring out shameless complaints to Yoshihi for some reason.

*"I'm sorry for being shameless. All of the things that I have done since I was born will have no meaning. I don't want to have such detestable ending. I'm scared of being forgotten by everyone."*

*"It's alright, Yoshiharu. Don't be afraid. I will protect you. Even if I have been protected by Uncle Soun so many times. You even protected me at Kizakihara. So this time, I shall protect you."*

*"... Yoshihi?"*

*"The sun still hasn't risen completely. There is about half an hour left. Don't give up, Yoshiharu. Brace your heart firmly. You can't lie down now."*

Yoshihi bowed her head to Shimazu Yoshihisa.

*"Shimazu Yoshihisa. Please tell us the truth about that incident. I will surrender to the Shimazu Clan at that time. If you wish to destroy the Sagara Clan then let it end at its 18<sup>th</sup> generation. You may bring a man from the Shimazu Clan as my husband. I can endure it. All of this for Yoshiharu's sake."*

*"Sagara Yoshihi. Do you wish to save Sagara Yoshiharu so much? Even if you understand that you will not be connected to him as a couple?"*

*"It is so. The Sagara Clan is different from the Shimazu Clan. When an internal crisis inside my clan continues, I'll keep losing a member of my family over and over again. Grandfather drove away Tokuchiyo who is my only younger sister from the clan. I desperately cling to Uncle Soun in order to find the meaning of why I was born. But I can't find any meaning in my life. I don't even have any ambition. There is no such big goal like the unification of the three states in the Sagara Clan. I don't have any lord nor master which I should like how Uncle Soun is to his lord. Until now, I am satisfied on seeing the people's smiles."*

However, it was different now.

Yoshihi was smiling, showing a gesture of brushing Yoshiharu's back which she couldn't touch.

*"This boy seems to resemble me in nature. He has no ambition to take over the world. But unlike me, he has found the meaning of his life. He has found it through his own power. To my own regret, it seems that I can find a bond to a person from the outside world. But I was parted away from it ever since I had become protected in the cage of Uncle Soun."*

Yoshiharu listened to Yoshihi's words, his consciousness fading away.

It was a gentle voice filled with affection.

Yoshiharu thought that it was Yoshihi's true voice.

*"It's because you want to share Sagara Yoshiharu's wishes that you've agreed on marrying him, right? Sagara Yoshihi."*

*"It is so. I thought that I might be able to have a family if it were with him. He is a kind person who will never betray me, but instead, protects me if he becomes my family. I want to protect his dream. If I can't protect him by marrying him. Because he will disappear. Then everything from the beautiful Kumagawa of my country that I love so much along with Hitoyoshi Castle, as well as the Yatsuhiro Port and the seat of the Sagara Clan's head, and finally, my own chastity; I will give them all to the Shimazu Clan."* [Wow. Love is such a martyr.]

*"Are you serious?"*

*"Yes. When I knew that he was my descendant, I came to understand everything. There is something that I wish to know about the curse suffered by the offspring who descends from the Sagara Clan, which causes the clan repeated infighting. But the blood of the Sagara family is not disgusting. Yoshiharu told me that someone's fate wasn't decided by bloodline. At first, when I was able to defend his aspiration, I found the meaning of my life, and I can proudly say it to Uncle Soun. It is what I have thought so. However..."*

*"However?"*

*"Only Tokuchiyo who is not well known by the Shimazu. She is my inauspicious younger sister. My only sister. I must protect my sister no matter what happens. So I will give up everything except Tokuchiyo. Please do not harm Tokuchiyo! Please don't lay your hands unto her!"*

*"It was a good thing to let Yoshihi attend the Shimazu Four Sisters' meeting. After all, Yoshihi loves her younger sister Tokuchiyo more than anyone else. Although there seems to be a reason why she can't express her love..."* Yoshiharu clogged his chest.

*"I will not destroy the Sagara Clan nor take away Tokuchiyo's life, and I will relieve the Sagara Clan's territory. I also will not force you to marry a man whom you do not love. I will not even do such thing because I myself am still a maiden,"* Yoshihisa answered.

*"I have injured both Iehisa-chan and Toshihisa-chan back then during the horse riding incident. And so, I thought that I will remain being the bad person until I die, just as it was supposed to be. But it isn't possible for me to become the bad guy. I have lost to you. The two 'Sagara Yoshiharu's.'"* [If you couldn't remember, here's a recollection: "Yoshihi" in kanji can also be read as "Yoshiharu."]

Shimazu Yoshihisa told the history about the horse riding incident to Iehisa.

*“The words that Toshihisa-chan told you when she scolded you. It wasn’t something that Toshihisa-chan should have said. In reality, it was me, as the eldest sister, who was supposed to say it.”*

[Is Yoshihiro actually a man, Iehisa’s mother, or a gigolo? Find out in the continuation!]

## Part 4

Yoshihisa, Yoshihiro, and Toshihisa.

The three sisters dearly adored the youngest child Iehisa years ago.

They weren't aware that their mothers' statuses were different.

Yoshihisa and the others wanted to send Iehisa to the capital; thereby she could receive strenuous training to become a princess general, excelling in literacy and military arts.

From the three sisters' own perspective, the Sanshu Pacification—perhaps they needed to give the youth the destiny to become the Shuras of the Shimazu Clan in the Kyushu subjugation.

Thus, they wanted to send the youngest Iehisa to a different world at the very least. The world outside Kyushu. The colorful world at the capital.

*Someday, under the fully blooming sakura tree at the capital, I want to make the people admire Iehisa whom has become a beautiful princess general. I would like to make the world know that there is a lovely princess general named Shimazu Iehisa in Satsuma. I hope so.*

However, it was necessary to give her special education as a general.

If Iehisa grew to be a spoiled princess for being loved too much, she would scatter in the battlefield and die. [Literally to be blown to smithereens.]

And so, Niuro Musashi, who had a small, muscular body that was akin to a daruma [see Kami-sama no Iu Toori], was chosen to be Iehisa's private tutor.

Niuro Musashi was a brave general and held obstinate loyalty to the Shimazu Clan.

All members of his family were well known of their premier prowess in sōjutsu [literally “art of the spear.”].

His bulky belly muscle could flick even a spear and was called an “iron wall.”

Although his visage was that of a demon, he was an elegant man from Satsuma who was familiar with the *Tale of Genji*.

Though his muscles resembled a bear's, his mind was similar to a maiden.

And so, Niuro Musashi who had two contradictory natures was suitable for the role of educating Iehisa... It should be how it was supposed to be.

However, Niuro Musashi came to care for Iehisa as if she were his own daughter.

Apparently, Iehisa's naïvete appeared to be a talent that would move people to love her.

Niuro Musashi was excited of the girl's young and lovely face.

*"To make this adorable little princess live for war is too pitiful,"* Niuro was perplexed, and he taught the elegant world of the *Tale of Genji* to Iehisa more than necessary.

Yoshihisa and the others were also lenient to Iehisa. They had the same mindset with Niuro Musashi.

*"At this rate, this could be a problem,"* they softly gave a warning to Niuro Musashi, but they couldn't completely blame him.

Iehisa grew to have elegant hobbies just like the youngest daughter of a typical feudal lord.

But Satsuma was a country of the battle-driven race of the Hayato people.

Finally, a rumor, *"Iehisa is a bad younger sister,"* rose from nowhere inside the whole clan.

*"Because her mother is different, the blood of the Shimazu family that runs through her body is thinner than the rest of her elder sisters',"* such notoriety was constructed in that fashion.

Because the rumor had reached Shimazu Takahisa who was the father of the four sisters, Iehisa's position within the family became delicate.

Originally, she had been the 4<sup>th</sup> princess of the clan.

Originally, there had been no reason for her to stay within the Shimazu's main family.

Unless she were exceptionally talented.

At this rate, Iehisa might be taken out for adoption.

It was an ordeal. Yoshihisa, Toshihisa and Yoshihiro hurriedly convened a gathering of the three respective people.

*"... What should I do... I can't think of a good idea. What's with this about having a different mother?! I will kill the person who has made this rumor with my bare hands!"*

The militaristic Yoshihiro was enraged because she was earnestly worried about Iehisa.

*"We must wait, Yoshihiro-nee. We need to know Iehisa's willingness to learn military tactics. As what Jisshinsai-ojisama said, we must prove that Iehisa has talent in military arts."*

*“Toshihisa-chan is right. If we can prove that Iehisa has talent, the talk about adoption will disappear. The person who made that rumor will also give up.”*

*“I see. I am too hot-blooded and wild... I am ashamed.”*

*“Yoshihiro-nee. A sister will share the other responsibilities. Leave this one to me and Yoshihisa-nee.”*

Toshihisa who was good at devising schemes became the key role; with Yoshihisa, the two of them devised a countermeasure.

They decided the date and time of the Four Sisters' horse riding event.

Someone among the sisters should make the horse analogy and retell the severe words whispered within the clan to Iehisa.

To say that Iehisa's lineage was different and that her blood of Shimazu was thinner, and that she couldn't be compared to the other three sisters.

All of this was to awaken Iehisa's motivation, in order to make her talent in military arts bloom.

They needed to convey callous remarks, and receive Iehisa's antipathy.

This was such a heavy responsibility.

But because the three sisters had always doted on Iehisa until now, that someone needed to do it.

*“I shall take it. If talking about military affairs, it should be me, the Valkyrie Yoshihiro.”*

*“Yoshihiro-nee is rejected from taking the role since you are incapable of acting. Soon, she will find out it is a lie. I think that if it's onee-sama, you would probably break down crying rivers because you feel sorry for Iehisa.”*

*“... Uuh... I might cry... I am sorry.”*

*“Yoshihiro-chan. I will be the one who say it to Iehisa. As part of my training to become a wicked person. As the eldest sister of Shimazu, there are times when I must act as the bad guy. The time is ripe.”*

Yoshihisa unusually decided it with determination.

*“I am the eldest sister who has inherited the family estate; there shall be no hindrance in terms of demeanor.”*

*“Will it be alright if it were done by Anesha? To begin with, I don’t think that being a villain will suit Anesha... I feel like it is impossible in a different way from mine.”*

*“Yoshihiro-chan. Although this is a heavy responsibility, this is also a trial for someone who will become the next head of the Shimazu Clan.”*

*“But wouldn’t it be better to witness Iehisa’s state as of now? Unlike us, the three sisters, she might be a late bloomer genius.”*

*“No, Yoshihiro-nee. The Shimazu Clan suffers from chronic shortage of military power due to our scarce population. So even if we win a fleeting battle, we will not be able to win the war. The Shimazu lacks ‘strategy’ to overturn the difference in military power. And we lack one person who can fill the gap within the Shimazu army. That person is Iehisa, who is dubbed by Jisshinsai-ojisama as a genius of military arts.”*

*“Toshihisa, if that is the case, then we must put our faith in Iehisa.”*

*“Oneesama. It might be cruel, but Iehisa was born late and is younger than us. Now that Owari’s Oda Nobuna has gained power and begun her radical unification of the world, we don’t have time to patiently wait for Iehisa’s growth.”*

But on the day during the horse riding event.

Yoshihisa hesitated at the last moment.

Iehisa who was not good at horsemanship was struggling desperately, so much.

Everything about Iehisa’s actions was cute.

Facing Iehisa’s state, she couldn’t help but to feel enamored. All of the things that she had arranged to speak couldn’t come out from her throat.

*“It can’t be helped. The horse that Iehisa uses came from a different mother from that of the horses we are using. It is similar with humans. Even though it is only one of the sisters who has bad quality, it isn’t necessary to worry about it, Iehisa.”*

Yoshihisa wasn’t able to speak out the villain dialog that she had been practicing for so many times in her bedroom to Iehisa.

But if someone did not say it, Iehisa would be driven out from the Shimazu Clan for being a bad younger sister.

Yet, by all means, she couldn’t speak.

*I don’t want to hurt Iehisa.*

*What shall I do? What shall I do? My body feels stiff as stone. I can't do anything.* At that time, Yoshihisa's body was petrified, rendering her body immobile.

On behalf of her eldest sister, the 3<sup>rd</sup> daughter Toshihisa spoke the lines that Yoshihisa was supposed to say from her own mouth.

The grudge of Iehisa, which was necessary to bear for Yoshihisa, Toshihisa took it all without wavering.

But the confusion and astonishment that Iehisa received when they talked about the matter related to her "blood" was far beyond the three sisters' expectations.

Yoshihisa did not know; neither do Toshihisa nor Yoshihisa.

The three sisters had never imagined it.

Because the three sisters had never worried for such matters.

Because they had never judged Iehisa like that before.

For Iehisa, she had always been troubled within her heart, and was suffering from the fact that her three sisters' mother was different from her own. She denied the suspicion she had had for her three elder sisters, and led an honest life by earnestly believing the delusion that her sisters love her.

*We were naïve.*

When Yoshihisa noticed that an indelible wound which would never heal for the rest of her life had been given to Iehisa, everything was too late.

Yoshihisa thought that she should protect Iehisa.

At that time, Yoshihiro rushed and tried to help Iehisa who was suffering in stabilizing her breath to normal.

But it was too late.

Furthermore, they couldn't do anything at all.

Yoshihisa shouted the words that suddenly floated on her mind.

Words, that she always wanted to say to the vassals that were abusing Iehisa's pride from the shadows.

*Those words were thrown to my younger sister Toshihisa.*

*“Be it horses or humans, everything is not determined by lineage alone! Iehisa would still be our younger sister, Toshihisa! Please apologize to Iehisa!”*

*Just now, I have become a real villain, the worst kind of villain.*

Yoshihisa regretted her own indecisiveness and cowardice.

*“... I was wrong. I am saying too much. Just forget what I have said today, Iehisa.”*

*And thus, Toshihisa bears all of our burdens, alone.*

That night, at Yoshihisa’s bedroom.

Toshihisa was smiling, supporting Yoshihisa’s back who couldn’t stop crying, *“I’m sorry, I’m sorry!”*

*“Yoshihisa-nee. This is better. The turbulent era of Sengoku will soon end. There will soon come the time that the Shimazu Clan will need to face the crisis of its extinction. For that time, we need one person from the Shimazu Clan who will be hated. So that, at the time of emergency, that person shall shoulder all of the sins and be discarded.”*

Toshihisa who excelled at foresight had already predicted that a severe future awaited the Shimazu Clan.

*“In order to protect the bond of the Shimazu Clan, the clan must not lose Yoshihisa-nee. Yoshihiro-nee is the person who is necessary to carry out the Shimazu Clan’s military power. Therefore, I am qualified to scold the young Iehisa.”*

Toshihisa quietly smiled like she had accepted her own destiny. It was a gentle expression.

*“Toshihisa-chan. You are going to such expense as to sacrifice yourself for us, your sisters? Will it be like today as well, that you intend to die to protect us?”*

*“... Maybe onee-sama wouldn’t understand it even if I explain it. I can’t tell what I am thinking right now. I will keep it inside my heart.”*

*“It’s not right! You absolutely must not do that! You shall take a husband earlier than us and bear a child! You are not allowed to be alone in this world! Younger sisters are absolutely not allowed to die earlier than their elder sisters!”*

*“Look, you’re beginning to cry again. You can’t do that, onee-sama. Even if there will be a crisis to befall upon the Shimazu Clan, it’s still just a talk about the future. Please do not cry like a child.”*

*“If you do not promise that then I will tell Iehisa-chan the truth about what happened today! I will spill the truth that I am the real bad guy!”*

*Yes, yes. Because I have promised, please stop doing that. Because we’ve given motivation to Iehisa with so much effort; it will have no meaning if everything goes back and she becomes spoiled. But even so, it is not possible to return it back completely. Because that child’s heart has been damaged.*

*“What’s done is done. I am the one who has done all of it alone. If we can make Iehisa’s talent in strategies bloom with this, then this is worth it. If all of the three sisters were to confess the truth about today’s incident to Iehisa, she may not be able to recover anymore. So that is why it’s fine, onee-sama.”*

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*“Iehisa-chan. I’m sorry. That is the truth. It was originally my responsibility as the eldest sister to scold the younger sister. Because of my indecisiveness, I have hurt you and Toshihisa-chan...”*

Iehisa wanted to believe Yoshihisa’s words.

She wanted to believe that she was not her three sisters’ imouto “with thinner blood” again. [Because repetition sucks, that’s why.]

Yoshihisa could never tell a lie.

But perhaps the gentle Yoshihisa wanted to protect Toshihisa.

While she was suffering from Toshihisa’s words, Iehisa was confused, now ashamed of herself because she doubted her sisters.

*“... I cannot fully believe the words that onee-sama has said... I may not belong to the Shimazu sisters...”*

*“Iehisa-chan! Wait!”*

*“Iehisa, please listen to me. I am not capable of acting or making up stories. Because I have no right to interfere since I am a coward. That is why I have kept silent on this matter. But that, is no more. Because I am also your elder sister.”* [Onee-san dakara. That sounds foolish, so nah.]

Yoshihiro, who had been watching the course of the meeting mostly in silence, began to talk.

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At that time, during the horse riding incident, Yoshihisa was at a loss for words and couldn't scold Iehisa.

Yoshihiro couldn't speak tactfully.

Toshihisa took the initiative while Yoshihiro could only look dumbfounded at how the situation had developed rapidly.

Yoshihiro blamed herself as she patted Iehisa's back, whose breath had become erratic on horseback.

*I don't understand anything except military arts. I have always been a step behind my elder and younger sisters. It was a usual thing, and I thought that it would be fine.*

*But the role of scolding Iehisa was originally my duty as the one who is in charge of the Shimazu Clan's military affairs.*

*I've only noticed it after all was too late.*

*If the one who severely scolded Iehisa for neglecting military arts was me, then Iehisa wouldn't be hurt this much.*

*Because Toshihisa, a person who is unrelated to the military affairs of the clan, shouldn't have scolded Iehisa, who did not want to learn military arts. It feels like her own existence is being denied.*

None among the three sisters could notice how Iehisa was worried about her own "blood" like this.

In that sense, the three sisters had made a mistake together.

However, if they simply said earlier, "*Devote yourself more on military arts,*" to Iehisa then the things wouldn't be like this.

A few days later.

Niuro Musashi who understood the most about the sudden change of Iehisa's behavior visited Yoshihiro.

He was a small-sized man from the Satsuma Hayato [Seems like I've forgotten this. The Hayato people are the Mongols of Kyushu. Search in Google for details.] who acted as Iehisa's private tutor.

*“Yoshihiro-sama. As one who holds the responsibility for neglecting the task of teaching this young princess who is as cute as a kitten. My eyes have been clouded by Iehisa-sama’s cuteness! Therefore, for the sake of the 4 Sisters’ future... I shall commit suicide.”*

Niuro Musashi stabbed his knife into his stomach, but his firm abdominal muscles blocked the blade like steel. [Just like how the Man of Steel can’t be circumcised.]

Niuro Musashi had a short stature, but he had been dreadfully training his body.

*“Damn it. This sword is too dull. Allow me to take my neck instead!”*

*“Don’t be hasty in committing suicide again. It’s not necessary to die twice! Hasn’t something happened because you’ve come to report it to me?”*

*“... Ever since that horse riding incident, Iehisa-sama has started to earnestly study military arts. However, her expression is tragic, yet, at the same time, also brave... I had a feeling that something bad would come. And I was right.”*

*“You are an elegant man whose heart is like a maiden’s, more than a real maiden’s. Unlike me, you can read Iehisa’s subtle expressions. If you are dead, then I will be troubled. But, why do you have such a bad feeling?”*

*“Iehisa-sama has invented a suicide tactic, with honorable death being its basis. Surely we have thought of something like that in our heads before.”*

*“Honorable suicide tactic? Although the wars of Shuras begin by discarding one’s own life, it has never occurred to me to use such an extreme tactic like that before.”*

*“The war of the Shimazu Clan will become increasingly intense from now on. Iehisa-sama will use and throw her own life like a bullet of Tanegashima for the three elder sisters. It seems that she is determined for her role as the youngest sister with the thinnest blood. Up until now, the love that she has received from Yoshihiro-sama and the other two sisters has been stopping her from awakening to that impulse.”*

Niuro Musashi handed over the manual of the war tactic *Tsuri no Buse* that Iehisa had written down to Yoshihiro.

It was an orderly-written book of an actual battle which made one think that it was not something that the childish Iehisa could have written.

Yoshihiro smoothly perused and understood it easily.

*It’s just like what grandfather has said. Iehisa is a genius of strategies. However, this is too extreme. This tactic seems to totally throw one’s own life away.*

*“The general himself shall become the decoy and retreat as he fights the enemy of ten times the amount of their own. The ambush and lure armies will turn around to perform a pincer attack to subjugate the pursuing enemy army. To put it in lay words, it’s like putting a hidden fishing field. Whether the battle will be won or lost, most of the decoy army will either get injured or killed.”*

*“Musashi. This is...”*

*“It would be impossible for us to score a triumphal victory in this country of the Shuras of Kyushu if we do not implement this tactic. The fight between the Shimazu Clan and the Ito Clan over the Hyuga Province for 150 years will not end. If the general does not give up his own life just as the soldiers do, then the Sanshu Pacification and Kyushu suppression will not be achieved. If we can’t carry it out then the Shimazu Clan will be swallowed up by the rulers of Honshu eventually. This is the words of Iehisa-sama. That princess is truly a genius of warfare.”*

*“Shall Iehisa herself become the general of the decoy army against the Ito army?”*

*“By daringly appearing in front of the 300 soldiers and luring the enemies which are 10 times of our own, the enemies will be destroyed by the Tsuru no Buse. This is the tactic that Iehisa-sama has made. Though she shall die, but the earnest wish of the Shimazu Clan for the Sanshu Pacification that has been going on for 150 years will finally be achieved.”*

*“No, she mustn’t. Iehisa is still a child. How could she be allowed to do this thing that is like a suicide?”*

*“Iehisa-sama absolutely intends to lead the soldiers on her own. The reason for this is because the decoy forces will be damaged severely, even if they win. The army will be exterminated if they lose; half of the soldiers will die if they win. This is the tactic that Iehisa-sama has thought about. Iehisa-sama will not stay behind to observe.”*

*“But we won’t be able to gather 300 soldiers. No common soldiers or cavalries would consent on using such a crazy tactic.”*

*“No. 300 volunteers have already gathered, Yoshihiro-sama.”*

Under the guidance of Niirō Musashi, Yoshihiro rode her horse to the back of the residence beside the riverbed, and then stared wide-eyed on the scene before him.

The 300 Satsuma Hayato men had gathered to become the death soldiers.

*“Yoshihiro-hime!”*

*“It is a bad joke to call Iehisa-hime an incompetent younger sister.”*

*“Iehisa-hime is ready to throw away her life on the battlefield.”*

*“We have made a mistake.”*

*“She is a brave person to want to lay her own life down and be useful for her elder sisters.”*

*“The young Iehisa-hime can’t be allowed to die without knowing anything about love and elegance.”*

*“Never!”*

*“We are the strongest men of Japan, the men of Satsuma Hayato!”*

*“To live and die for battle is the duty of the sons of Satsuma.”*

*“In this battle, we shall give our life to protect Iehisa-sama and win by all means!”*

The men stood, holding their spears up as they gave out cries of wild monkeys.

Yoshihiro knew that the retainers always loved Iehisa.

*“I only have one condition,”* Yoshihiro informed the men.

*“I will not allow the younger sister to die before the eldest. I don’t want Iehisa to die. In this decisive battle, I shall become the general. It is my role to wield a spear and pierce the enemies on the battlefield. Men. If you agree with me, then fight and die together with me.”*

Everyone nodded.

Just before the commencement of the Battle of Kizakihara.

At the strategy meeting, Iehisa was furious at the objection from Yoshihiro, *“Why won’t you let me be the general?!”*

Moreover, Toshihisa also said, *“This tactic has a lot of flaws. It will be alright if the enemies we face are only the Ito Clan. What will happen if the Sagara army and Kai Soun help the Ito clan from Higo?”*

The enemy reinforcement should come out from behind the Shimazu ambush force and attack it.

*In order to drive out Higo’s reinforcements, my trap is needed, but I was rejected, “Can’t I be a help to my elder sisters?” I was discouraged.*

The reason why Toshihisa was stricter than usual to Iehisa was because she did not want Iehisa to know the truth behind the horse riding event.

But more than anything else, Toshihisa knew that Iehisa devised *Tsuri no Buse* to redeem herself in the expense of her own life.

When Yoshihiro handed out the manual of the *Tsuri no Buse* to her on the night before the meeting, Toshihisa bit her lip and cried silently.

*“I only know things about military arts. Your wisdom is necessary. If we put our hands together then Iehisa and the men of Satsuma Hayato who have devoted their life to Iehisa can be saved from annihilation,”* Yoshihiro clasped Toshihisa’s hands and begged, *“Please make way for victory.”*

And so, Toshihisa made a plan to complement the *Tsuri no Buse*. It was a plan that was carried out in sequence.

She would move the Ryuzoji Clan to attack the Aso Clan of Northern Higo to block the strongest Shura of Kyushu, Kai Soun.

Then use a false messenger to make sure that Sagara Yoshihi of Southern Higo would not reach and engage in the decisive battlefield.

Sagara Yoshiharu was strict when it came to blood relations, but she trusted Kai Soun completely. Now that Kai Soun himself couldn’t enter the war, he wouldn’t let Sagara Yoshihi enter the battle between Ito and Shimazu Clans. She should be stopped by all means.

*Even if Yoshihi who values faith and trust would move out against his will, we will send a spy disguised as Kai Soun’s messenger so that Sagara Yoshihi will stop moving her army on the way in respect to Kai Soun’s will.*

The secret information should’ve led to victory in battle. But, it ended in failure due to the unexpected arrival of Sagara Yoshiharu who had come from the future. The 500 Sagara soldiers arrived at the battlefield. Iehisa’s *Tsuri no Buse* tactic was about to collapse.

If Iehisa who did not have an overwhelming military fame were the general, then the men of Satsuma Hayato would’ve continued fighting until the last standing soldier and, after that, would receive a pincer attack from the Sagara army and Ito army who had overwhelming military power, and should’ve been exterminated until none remained.

At the last moment, due to Yoshihiro’s military fame, the supreme general of the Ito army had his judgment blinded by joy and excitement at the chance of killing the “Valkyrie” Shimazu Yoshihiro. A reverse victory happened at the last moment.

*“During the stormy meeting, we gathered all aspects in one strategy. Iehisa’s tactic; Toshihisa’s stratagems; the military power that I was bestowed with; and the decision made by Yoshihisa-anesha to entrust the decisive battle to us; the three younger sisters have brought this victory,”* Yoshihiro thought so.

The Sanshu Pacification was achieved, and Iehisa was saved.

Half of the 300 men of the Satsuma Hayato who had volunteered to be the decoy army did not return, but the other half survived.

As she looked at the corpses of her fallen allies and enemies strewn on the battlefield, Yoshihiro prayed so that their souls might rest in peace. At the same time, she was thankful that Iehisa survived due to their hard fight.

*“Yoshihiro-hime!”*

*“I will not allow the younger sister to die before the eldest!”*

*“We haven’t forgotten those words on the last moment when we were about to die.”*

Niiro Musashi who had survived this battle nodded and said, “A new era has arrived at Kyushu, Yoshihiro-sama. The war of the Shimazu Clan will change.”

*“This is all that I know. There is no one within the Shimazu family that despises you due to your blood. Toshihisa, Yoshihisa-anesha and all of our retainers as well. That is the reason why we could win against the Ito army. At last, we were able to change the 150 years of stagnation in the Shimazu’s history of the chronicles of Kyushu. But Iehisa, I am different. There is something I want to scold you about. Something that I have to do.”*

Yoshihiro gently embraced Iehisa’s shoulders.

*“You fool. There is now way that I’d allow my younger sister die before me.”*

From Yoshihiro’s throat, who embraced Iehisa, came out a voice that did not sound like soberly complete words. [She indeed is crying]

*“... Yes. Nee-chan...”*

There was no telling whether the reason why Toshihisa returned an answer to comply with Yoshihiro’s words was due to Yoshiharu’s talk about her and Iehisa’s future.

In turn, afterwards, Toshihisa hugged Iehisa.

*“... Toshihisa-nee-chan. I was foolish to be suspicious. To doubt Toshihisa-nee-chan...”*

*“It’s alright. It’s because you are not smart enough to find out my foresight.”*

*“Annoying. Why does Toshihisa-nee-chan keep being so sarcastic? You won’t be able to marry someone.”*

*“Iehisa, promise me one thing.”*

*“I shouldn’t take a husband earlier than Toshihisa-nee-chan, is that it?”*

*“It’s different; are you truly an idiot, Iehisa?”*

*“Then what is it?”*

*“Even if it’s just one day, you must live longer than me.”*

Iehisa who did not know the future couldn’t understand the true meaning behind those words.

She showed her white teeth and laughed.

*“This is strange. Somehow, it feels as if the eldest sister were not needed at all. I say, this is good after all; you three should just get cozy with each other. Because I shall become the real villain.”*

Yoshihisa pouted her lips in boredom.

*“... Such enviable sisters... My family is different from the Shimazu family. It only has repeated internal fightings.”*

Sagara Yoshihi squinted her eyes after being illuminated by the morning sun all of the sudden.

It was morning.

*“... Yoshiharu. I can touch you...”*

Yoshihi cried out.

Yoshiharu’s sense of his own body had come back.

*“Ah? I was on the verge of falling asleep before, but I am still alive?”*

*“You haven’t disappeared. You are saved. It’s because the Shimazu 4 Sisters have decided to cancel your marriage with me.”*

*“My eyesight has gone dark before, but I could hear the conversation. Congratulation, Iehisa! I can understand this well. You are Kyushu’s number one most beloved younger sister. You don’t need to be worried anymore.”*

*“Ah! This is all thanks to you, Sagara! The wedding has also been formally cancelled with this. Now you can be my husband!”*

*“Wait a moment, Shimazu Iehisa! Why does Yoshiharu have to be your husband? As his ancestor, I will never permit this!”*

*“Nyaa nyaa? When I thought that a love rival had disappeared, a sister-in-law has appeared!”* [Yoshihi-obaachan]

It seemed that all of the problems had been settled.

*“Sagara Yoshiharu. This Shimazu Yoshihisa will not forget your kindness during these last 3 days. Because I am an evil person, I will forget your kindness in those 3 days, but I will cancel your marriage with Yoshihi.”*

*“It’s not an evil person who forgets kindness but a cat, right?”*

*“Oh, I hate Honbyo Temple. All the Nyankosou and Christians are prohibited in Shimazu. Wouldn’t I look like an evil person if I suppress religion?”*

*“Don’t you think that there is no meaning if you become like that? You are not qualified to become a bad person.”*

*“DOSHITEEE?!”* [why]

*“You have spoken out the truth in front of Iehisa after all.”*

*“It’s because, it is impossible to become a bad person in front of Iehisa!”*

*“Sagara! This is good! Now you can negotiate a concord with the Otomo Clan.”* [I’ve literally been cringing these past few days because MS Word... Yeah, it marks “a reconciliation” as grammatically incorrect. So, I’ll settle with “concord.”]

*“It can’t be helped that the marriage is cancelled. Even though Yoshiharu poked his nose at the Shimazu Sisters’ quarrel and should have abandoned it with all of his might, he has ended up using the short distance to his goal. This man’s luck is truly devilish. Or is it because he is an unselfish person with an extraordinary greed?”*

However, this was simply not the ending.

There was one princess general who was still being stubborn.

It’s the Valkyrie—Yoshihiro.

Yoshihiro did not believe in mystics or miracles at all.

She was an ultimate realist who was more stubborn than Nobuna.

*“Sagara Yoshiharu. I thank you for resolving this matter. But this is a different story. Your marriage with Sagara Yoshihi will be held now as per schedule. I will never cancel this one.”*

*“Eh? Eh? Eh?”* Everyone raised their voice.

*“Shimazu Yoshihiro. Are you an airhead who can’t read the atmosphere? Are you an idiot? Here I am, being a little moved by the Shimazu family’s farce for a while, yet all of it was broken by you!”*

*“Yoshihiro-nee-chan, no, no! Please stop the wedding!”*

*“... Yoshihiro-nee. Haven’t you seen that Sagara Yoshiharu’s figure has disappeared? The fact that his existence will be gone once he gets married with Yoshihi isn’t false.”*

*“It was just an optical illusion. To think that even a clever person like Toshihisa would fall for that. This is simply because everyone is tired for staying up late at night, as well as Konoe-sama’s sudden arrival.”*

*“Yoshihiro-chan. Does being a Takegami make you unable to understand the atmosphere and have inflexible thinking? Are you going to end up like Kan’u [Guan Yu] from the Annals of the Three Kingdoms [Sangokushi]?”*

*“As her onee-sama. I feel like my cute Iehisa is clinging at Sagara Yoshiharu too much. I’m worried that Iehisa might be taken away if I let the situation loosen. But if I were to give him a wedding with Sagara Yoshihi, then my jealousy and strong desires to monopoly Iehisa could be restrained in a cage. With this, I will feel relieved.”*

*“Onee-sama! For such a reason! There is a limit to stupidity!”*

*“Toshihisa. It is not that I am being too concerned with Iehisa [Oops, siscon. Dyeee~~~~]. It is a lie that a person’s existence will be exterminated wholly. This is about 90% of the reason! My worry about Iehisa is only about 10%!”*

*“Is this the truth, Yoshihiro-chan? Can you say that it is the truth to your onee-sama? If you can’t say it in front of your onee-sama, won’t you be called as a bad person?”*

*“Uuuh... Then the 90% is being worried about Iehisa. The fact that a nobody like Sagara Yoshiharu calls himself the descendant of Sagara Yoshihi is too absurd; I don’t believe it. It was because this pathetic man from the future, Sagara Yoshiharu, was under the effect of some hallucination. It should be impossible to call him the descendant of the Sagara Clan. He is also not qualified to become a husband for the Shimazu family, which has a venerable history. There is a status difference from the beginning. I feel sorry for Iehisa. If Iehisa ever elopes with a man, then I will die in grief.”*

*“Even if you are fond of our imouto, this is too much, Yoshihiro-chan!”*

*“Wait a minute! To think that I will disappear from this world for such a stupid reason! This is a women trouble! My women trouble has revived once again! Help me, Zenki!”*

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Atop the heavens, an astral being—Zenki—was laughing at Yoshiharu’s ordeal. [Took my own liberty to make this sentence.]

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*“My body is becoming transparent again!”* Yoshiharu cried, slipping from Yoshihi’s arms.

*“Yoshiharu, who is Zenki? Ah, Toshihisa, think of a plan! This should be a specialty for someone who has weak happiness and a flat chest like you!”* [Yoshihi addresses Toshihisa with “kisama.” As previously mentioned, “kisama” was once politely formal. The setting is the Sengoku era, so it’s clearly ambiguous whether she’s being disrespectful, which would imply that they are in bad terms, or acting polite. However, from context, it’s leaning on the former.]

*“Shut up, you annoying vixen! Why don’t you make the plan yourself instead?”*

*“Enough. The root of this problem is because Yoshiharu has no bride to marry with. If it comes to this, then I must impose a bride except myself to Yoshiharu now. It’s annoying, but if Iehisa would become Yoshiharu’s wife, is... Wait, why am I thinking of such humiliating measure? Don’t joke with me!”*

*“So, Sagara Yoshiharu can’t take a bride from the Shimazu family! Because there is no conclusive evidence that he is a man from the Sagara family, there is a problem regarding his social status! In the first place, Yoshihiro-nee does not allow Iehisa to be his bride with firm determination!”*

*“There is positive proof; he has begun to disappear! Well, Toshihisa, you should become Yoshiharu’s bride! Naturally, the condition is to respect me as a mother-in-law, and be humble and serve me like a servant!”*

*“Haaaaaa?! W-W-W-Why do I must become this monkey’s b-b-bride?”* [Yes. She’s utterly dumbfounded that grammar is inapplicable.]

*“Why are you blushing? Don’t tell me that you—?”*

Goemon who was hiding inside the ceiling sent with her eyes a signal to Yoshiharu, *“Sagara, if goes on, all the things you’ve done will be meaningless. Let’s just kill Yoshihiro,”* but Yoshiharu naturally shook his head, rejecting it.

After all, even with Goemon’s ninjutsu, it would still be useless since Shimazu Yoshihiro was not someone who could easily be assassinated.

Yoshihiro who lived as a Shura in Kyushu was not merciful like Uesugi Kenshin. Goemon might be killed this time. [Well, something in this part will somehow happen in Volume 14; saying it will be a spoiler]

And Yoshihiro sensed the exchange of their eye signals immediately.

*This is bad! Goemon, run!*

*But, Sagara will disappear if I run away!*

Yoshihiro held the sword hilt on her waist, *“Is there someone suspicious inside the ceiling,”* and was about to stand up, but then.

*“Hohoho. In order to clear away the shame of my previous failure, Konoe Sakihisa has splendidly revived! I am the most elegant aristocrat as expected!”*

Having an inflamed and swelling eye, the black-toothed and white-eyebrowed Kampaku—Konoe Sakihisa—had applied his makeup once again and entered Yoshihisa’s bedroom.

*“Eh. Kampaku-sama, what’s with this tragic appearance? Is this the work of a suspicious person? What kind of devil used violence against Konoe-sama [It’s you, musclehead-chan]! This Yoshihiro shall capture that person and cut him in half!”*

While Yoshihiro who had full loyalty to the Konoe family was about to prostrate, Konoe simply said, *“Well, it’s impossible to talk about it. Don’t worry about it. The time will be wasted if I explain it to you,”* and successfully repressed Yoshihiro with an exhausted expression.

*“... Revealing the truth would result in more complicated situations, and you would definitely perform seppuku.”*

*“Ah. This is the Kampaku, Konoe Sakihisa-sama. He is an elegant, wonderful, and aristocratic gentleman who has dominated the top of the court nobles’ society. He is exactly like Hikaru Genji.”*

Yoshihi began to cleverly behave modestly and revered Konoe immediately.

*“Hohoho. Sagara Yoshihi, you have donated a lot to the imperial court before. Your loyalty is truly admirable. Leave the matter of the Sagara Clan to me. I will prevent the Sagara Clan to be merged with the Shimazu Clan.”*

*“Hehe. I am thankful.”*

*“Aaaargh!! Sagara Yoshihi! You truly are a cunning woman. You have made a favor to Konoe-sama faster than me. Do you want to use that favor right now? Which means that you want to repair your position by having a high-ranking post from the Ashikaga Shogunate and receive the word of ‘justice;’ you are cunning!”*

*“Hmph. A noble human being like me should closely associate herself with the nobles from the capital. Saying me being cunning or clever, Shimazu Toshihisa, I don’t want to be told like that by a flat-chested person like you.”*

*“My chest has nothing to do with this!”*

*“You have a lead over that troublesome Konoe? You’ve made a good relationship with the shogunate and imperial court for the sake of the Higo Province? I see a surprising talent inside Yoshihi,” Yoshiharu was impressed.*

*“... Konoe-sama is in my bedroom... If it were Masunaga Danjo then she would recommend me to poison the tea... What should I do?”*

*“Now, now. Shimazu Yoshihisa. How fluent are you to talk about wicked plans. To begin with, I am here to talk about the matter regarding Sagara Yoshiharu.”*

*“Nyaa nyaa! Long time no see, Konoe-sama! Are you here to help Sagara? Please persuade Yoshihiro-nee-chan!”*

*“That’s right, jii-san. Please do something! Please say something to clear up the failure of our operation! Yoshihiro should have listened if it were from you!”*

*“No. Even by the order of Konoe-sama, it is outrageous for Sagara Yoshiharu to become a husband of a Shimazu Clan’s princess. I have decided to hold your wedding with Sagara Yoshihi no matter what it takes!”*

*“So this impossible for you, Konoe-jii-san? Have I gotten checkmated?” Yoshiharu looked at his transparent hands and frowned.*

*“This is my responsibility for relying on Oda Nobuna’s ambition,” Konoe nodded.*

*“... This is such an unpleasant contract, but it can’t be helped. This is my last trump card. Please forgive me, great ancestor of the Konoe and Fujiwara family! The Fujiwara family’s precious lineage will be significantly altered by my own hands.”*

Konoe lifted his eyelids and thereby majestically declared thus,

*“Listen, Shimazu 4 Sisters. And above all, the most faithful Yoshihiro. You, as well, Sagara Yoshihi. Since we can’t fulfill our mission as a messenger to Satsuma, and because I was impressed by Sagara Yoshihi’s admirable manners towards me, I shall decide it here and now. I shall take Sagara Yoshiharu as my adopted son.”*

*“Adopted son? This Sagara Yoshiharu shall become Konoe-sama’s adopted son?”*  
Yoshihiro was at a loss for words.

*“Nyaa nyaa,” Iehisa raised her voice like a cat. “Sagara will be your adopted son? Are you serious?” She was puzzled.*

*“Indeed. Though it is a simple matter, it is my responsibility to recover the loss of my ancestor that has gone downward within Satsuma until now. Yoshiharu and Yoshihi’s*

*appearance and personality contrast against each other, but it is a fact that Yoshiharu's figure began to disappear when he was about to marry Yoshihi. The whole Sagara family formerly belonged to my respected Fujiwara family's south branch a long time ago; the Sagara Clan moved from their manor at Totomi Province to Kyushu and became a samurai. In other words, Yoshiharu is the descendant of Yoshihi and, by some forced interpretation, also have the Fujiwara family's lineage within his thin blood heritage."*

*"Wait a second, Konoe-jiisan! If you are saying that, then the future Japan will be flooded by people who have the heritage of the Fujiwara or the Tachibana family [The Tachibana here isn't the one from Kyushu, but from the Imperial Court]," Yoshiharu was amazed.*

*"Idiot! There is some luck that you've got there so keep your mouth shut!" Yoshihi blocked Yoshiharu's mouth.*

*"Because Sagara Yoshiharu has become my adopted son, then there will be no problem with his lineage. Well now, for the Shimazu family whose loyalty has lied on the Imperial Palace and the Konoe family for years until now, I want you to give a bride to my adopted son Yoshiharu. If that happens then the two families—the Shimazu and Konoe families—shall be merged together as one. Or do you want me to give the precious Sagara Yoshiharu to Sagara Yoshihi instead?" [Good guy Sakihisa-ojiisan]*

*"Nyaa nyaa. I thought that Sagara and Konoe-sama bawled against each other and had a comical relationship, but you two are actually, strangely close! Now that he has become Konoe-sama's adopted son, then does that mean that Sagara will become the next Kampaku?"*

*"Hohoho. Since he is Sagara Yoshihi's descendant, it would not be an impossible matter."*

*"From being a sandal bearer of the Oda Clan to becoming a Kampaku! Sagara has been successful in life!"*

*"This monkey? So the rumor that Oda Nobuna's absurd insistence on making him a Kampaku is true," next to Iehisa, Toshihsa became absent-minded.*

*"Thank you, Kampaku-sama! With this, Sagara's family is saved! So I shall be Sagara's bride!"*

*"W-W-W-Wait, Iehisa! You are still a child! Our two elder sisters are worried about my marriage and are trying to push me to become a bride earlier than them! So, for the sake of the Shimazu family, I shall become the sacrifice!"*

*"Nyaa nyaa, why suddenly bring that up? Toshihsa-nee-chan is too sneaky."*

*"Well, well. Iehisa-chan and Toshihsa-chan. Here I thought that you two had reconciled; it was such a short intimate relationship. And I don't want you two to fight each*

*other, so I think the eldest sister Yoshihisa-chan should be the representative of the Shimazu Clan and become Sagara Yoshiharu's bride."*

*"Eeh? Why did you make such a prompt decision without using fortune slips at such time? Yoshihisa-nee keeps saying that she wants to become a real villain, and now she is doing it by taking a husband earlier than me!"*

*"Because, Toshihisa-chan. According to the report that you have put together, Sagara Yoshiharu has an unrivaled love for breasts. Yoshihiro-chan is removed from being a candidate. Out of the remaining three sisters, it goes without saying who has the biggest one, right? You'll understand if you see it, right?"*

*"Nyaa nyaa. As soon as Sagara've got a promotion, you two want to become his wife?"*

*"Well, well, Iehisa-chan. If I meddle in, then that would make me a villain, right? In the first place, it's impossible for Iehisa-chan. Yoshihiro-chan. Since Yoshihiro-chan will absolutely not allow that."*

*"For such thing. Even though she keeps persistently trying to find a husband for me, why does this person need to meddle in here? There is a chance that Yoshihisa-nee can be a true villain. You can't choose anyone else except me; so if you want to decide the match by comparing the size of our chests, then I shall kill you, Sagara Yoshiharu!"*

*"If this is supposed to happen, then we should just do a spear battle, and the one who wins will become Sagara's bride."*

*"It's useless, Iehisa-chan. Sisters can't kill each other, okay? If so, why not decide the bride through fortunetelling? Our Shimazu Clan has been protected by the Inari-no-Kami ever since our first generation Shimazu Tadahisa was born under the providence of Hitodama [will-o'-the-wisp] at Sumiyoshi-Taisha in Settsu. If it has become a big affair, then we should let Inari-no-Kami decide it."*

*"Yoshihisa-nee is using fortune slips again. Such indecisiveness. Please respond to my feelings [it also means "chest."] and give me a good one!"*

*Amidst the commotion, Konoe Sakihisa was gnashing his teeth, "Kuuu~! Sagara Yoshiharu is being fought over by the Shimazu Sisters! While I was beaten up half-dead by the sleeping Yoshihiro, Sagara Yoshiharu has grasped the heart of the 3 of Shimazu Sisters! As for me, I am feeling mortified! Such humiliation!"*

*Yoshihi was lost in thought as she folded her arms, "It's unacceptable, but it can't be helped since it is all to save Yoshiharu."*

*She didn't say that she "hated" it, but she thought that the motive was too detestable.*

*“No, wait. If I get married to any of the three sisters, the outcome will still be the same since Nobuna would come to kill me. Konoe-jiisan, as the Kampaku, shouldn’t you be able to handle this more easily? Once I do this, I will not be able to return to the Oda Clan again. Is there any other way?”* Yoshiharu was thoroughly bewildered.

*“I’ve become the adopted son of the Konoe family. Because the Shimazu family will never be convinced to cancel my marriage with Yoshihi. But I don’t want to marry a princess of the Shimazu Clan either; it would be a convenience to me for only a while. Please think of a better recourse somehow.”*

*“\*You dense motherfucker [I’ve once again taken my liberty to make a sentence. Seriously, have mercy on your son] \*. I don’t want to incite Oda Nobuna’s anger, but things have gone out of control now.”*

*“But you have unnecessarily incited the three sisters too.”*

*“But I have to do this too. If not, then the Shimazu 4 Sisters won’t cancel your marriage with Yoshihi.”*

*“... The sisters were just hugging each other and crying a while ago, and now they are arguing over one monkey. After all, having a sister is an ugly thing, Sagara Yoshiharu. It was a good decision that I banish Tokuchiyo. A princess general of the Sengoku era does not need a family after all...”*

*“Yoshihi is also disgusted. Please don’t look sad!”*

As the three sisters were arguing, *“Sagara Yoshiharu will become Konoe-sama’s adopted son, but I still have to carry out his marriage with Yoshihi. Once a warrior decides, he will not take his words back,”* Yoshihiro did not change her mind, and she stood up, opening her eyes widely. The rest were overwhelmed into silence at once.

*“To begin with, a master is a master, while a retainer is a retainer. The integration of the Konoe and Shimazu families is absolutely outrageous. In that situation, it’s like a retainer supplanting his lord. My Anesha is a little overwhelmed because of many surprises, but I am still stable. Sagara Yoshiharu and Sagara Yoshihi, the preparation has been set in the main hall. The time for marriage has come!”*

Shimazu Yoshihiro’s stubbornness was too terrifying.

*“In addition, I don’t want to see the three sisters quarrel in this way after reconciling. Rather than having them scramble, it is better that none of them becomes Sagara Yoshiharu’s bride. Everyone ought to refrain from doing it, out of respect to each other respectively. The family’s insistence to claim Yoshiharu as their husband is unnecessary. Give that to Sagara Yoshihi who wants to save his life. Isn’t that right? Anesha, Toshihisa, Iehisa?”*

*“So, even with all of the uproar that has been going on, we can’t save Sagara’s life?”*

*“Hahaha. Iehisa. You are still a child. A human does not live in the past nor the future. Therefore, there is no such thing as a man from the future. It’s just that Sagara Yoshiharu convinces himself of that. Besides, the fact that his body is disappearing is merely because of your imagination.”*

*“... Even when Sagara Yoshiharu’s existence is waning, Yoshihiro-nee still insists that it was just an illusion. Now, what should we do?”*

*“Hmm. Yoshihiro-chan’s unyielding sense of realism has gone through the level of being a Takegami. It’s hopeless now.”*

*“I have faced honorable defeat using my real face. Even my trump card of making him my adopted son has failed. You have even refuted the bulletproof theory about Sagara Yoshiharu’s disappearance that I have preached about with only a few words. There is no more that I can do now,”* Konoe had exhausted all of his resources, and therefore declared defeat.

*“Are you joking?”* Yoshihi flew into rage.

*“Yoshihisa! Toshihisa! Kill this stubborn woman! If it’s impossible, then just confine her! Because she doesn’t listen to other people’s story, Yoshiharu will disappear!”*

*“Iyaaa. Do you remember the Battle of Kizakihara? Yoshihiro-chan is the strongest Takegami of Satsuma. It is impossible to confine her. We will be met with retaliation and get defeated.”*

*“Yeah. It would still be impossible even if one suspended from the ceiling throws a poison dart at her. Apparently, Yoshihiro-nee’s stubbornness, as the source of her strength, has become an abominable thing to see on the battlefield.”*

*“Nyaa nyaa! Sagara’s body is beginning to disappear once again.”*

*“... Yoshiharu’s body has become so transparent that it’s enough to see the wall on the other side of his body.”*

*“It is truly finished,”* Yoshiharu was in despair.

However, the situation suddenly turned to an unexpected surprise.

At this time, a messenger entered Yoshihisa’s bedroom.

*“Kai Soun of the Aso Clan has advanced! Sagara Yoshihi has surrendered to the Shimazu Clan. As I speak, the Sagara Clan’s territories are being annexed, and he is marching through the highway to fight a decisive battle with the Shimazu Clan!”*

*“Uncle Soun,”* Yoshihi began to lose her voice.

*“Didn’t the Ryuzoji Clan keep Kai Soun in check?” Yoshihiro questioned the messenger.*

*“No. It’s impossible. Kai Soun should’ve been busy dealing with the Ryuzoji Clan,” even Toshihisa couldn’t believe the messenger’s sudden report either.*

*“No. Kai Soun who learned that the Sagara army had surrendered to Shimazu at Kizakihara has formed a night raid at the Ryuzoji’s main camp to confront their supreme commander. He then threatened them, ‘I will send troops to the south and annihilate the Shimazu army. But if you are going to disturb me any further, then I shall attack north and destroy the Ryuzoji Clan entirely. I will burn down Hizen and kill every last person on it. Not only people, but also dogs and bears.’ Kai Soun is the Shura among Shuras who killed 3 of his own sons who had plotted a rebellion against his master clan. The Ryuzoji Clan who were afraid of this man withdrew during daybreak. They also said this, “We have sent troops as per requested by the Shimazu Clan. But there is no worth in having a war of annihilation with Kai Soun because of the Shimazu Clan.”*

*“Impossible. To advance towards the Sagara Clan’s territory without hesitation. Kai Soun should’ve exchanged a written oath of renunciation of war with Sagara Yoshihi,” said Toshihisa.*

*“Kai Soun holds absolute loyalty to the Aso Clan. If the Sagara Clan perishes, then Aso Clan would also fall. Kai Soun had refused to dispatch any troops. But then, he was blamed by his master, ‘Aso Clan or Sagara Clan? Which one is your master?’ And so, he reluctantly broke his vow and went to the front with determination. It is said that at that time, Kai Soun had the look of a demon who was capable of murdering his own master,” the messenger described further.*

*“I was going to confront Kai Soun after the Sagara Clan’s territories that remained as a neutral zone until has fallen to the Shimazu Clan’s hand. But Kai Soun’s actions are too earlier than our expectations. It’s impossible to hold the marriage ceremony now,” Yoshihisa’s expression changed completely.*

*“Nee-sama. We haven’t finished securing the large Hyuga territory that the Ito Clan has abandoned. Now that most of our troops have been dispatched to Hyuga right now, there is not enough military power to face Kai Soun in a decisive battle. We must intercept them at Higo immediately. If Satsuma is invaded, then the Otomo Clan will also advance quickly to south and to Hyuga!”*

*“I understand, Toshihisa-chan. Kai Soun must have noticed that our preparations weren’t regulated well yet, and has decided on a surprise attack. Now that Southern Higo has been annexed to the Shimazu Clan, the Aso Clan has already been overwhelmed by a difference in military power, and so, there is no more chance of victory for them other than this.”*

*“This is not Toshihisa’s responsibility. Even I who devote everything to martial arts keep being amazed by Kai Soun’s callous nature. That person is a genuine Shura.”*

*“Sagara Yoshihi. Now that Yoshiharu and the 500 Sagara soldiers have been returned, please return to your territory quickly and intercept Kai Soun at the coastline. Until the Shimazu armies that have scattered in Hyuga return, you must gain time somehow.”*

Yoshihi exchanged an oath of the renunciation war with Kai Soun.

The only time the promise would be broken was when Yoshihi died.

*“Yoshihi will be conflicted!”* Yoshiharu raised a protest.

*“You should just gain some time. I didn’t say that you had to fight against Kai Soun in the front. If necessary, then I shall send out the reserve army. Although, if there is anything that could be said, that is that the opponent is the undefeated Shura of Kyushu. He is not someone who can be confronted against with the Sagara Clan’s military power alone.”*

*“But. These two people’s relationship is like that of a father and a daughter. Yoshihi, you must refuse it!”*

*“... It’s alright, Yoshiharu. These are things that happen to a surrendering samurai. If I oppose the current head’s order, then there will be no place to stay within the Shimazu Clan for the Sagara Clan’s retainers. It’s because I have to make distinction as a newcomer who has lost a battle and surrendered, I feel some affinity with this place and am permitted to save the 500 soldiers who surrendered at Kizakihara. The Sagara army is suitable to be the vanguard. Wouldn’t you be able to barely survive after Uncle Soun decides to fight me? Look, it’s possible to touch your hand now.”*

Yoshihi laughed as she intertwined her fingers with Yoshiharu’s.

Her smile was too beautiful, and Yoshiharu couldn’t help but to hold a premonition.

*Now that we have surrendered and serve the Shimazu Clan, Yoshihi is in conflict with Kai Soun whom she exchanged an oath of the renunciation of war with. Doesn’t she intend to die at the battlefield? This is the same as the history that I know!*

*“What folly! The Kyushu disturbance should’ve stopped and, instead, been accelerated steadily! Sagara Yoshihi is an important princess general who holds overflowing loyalty for the Imperial Court! I have to go on a direct negotiation with Kai Soun and scold him!”*

*“Aah. Because you will be killed by Soun silently, please keep still, Kampaku-sama.”*  
Yoshihisa turned a troubled face at Konoe’s words.

*"It's a cruel thing to have these two people fight each other,"* Iehisa protested at Yoshihisa and her other elder sisters.

*"It's said that Kai Soun has begun to advance to the Sagara Clan's territory. Don't worry. You shouldn't fight, and, instead, protect the main camp until the reserve army arrives."* Toshihisa admonished Iehisa, and so, Iehisa reluctantly agreed.

*"Sagara, is it going to be alright? I have a bad feeling..."*

*"I will change Yoshihi's fate this time,"* Yoshiharu nodded, quietly stroking Iehisa's head.

## Chapter 5

Resounding Field

### Hibiki-no-Hara

[Translator's Note: This chapter was exhaustive. The dialogue for each person reaches more than four lines, enough to make a paragraph.] [Editor's Note: Fuck footnotes. Justice for kindle and mobile readers. Furthermore, regarding my use of commas in revising sentences, bear with it; creative punctuations add meaning and emotion to the flow of words.]

South Higo—at Mount Yatsushiro.

Late at night, in the wooden Myouken Temple.

Yoshiharu and Yoshihi, the two of them visited this shrine alone.

Sagara Yoshihi—who had been permitted to return with her 500 soldiers without rest to confront Kai Soun's forces, who had captured Yatsushiro from Mifune Castle.

Sagara Yoshiharu, who should've been held hostage by the Shimazu Clan, was returned to Yoshihi under Shimazu Yoshihisa.

With this, Yoshihi couldn't betray the Shimazu Clan; but fighting Kai Soun would break her heart... It was a painful dilemma that should've even been impossible in Kyushu, the world of Shura.

Now, with the written oath of the renunciation of war that was kept inside Myouken Temple held closely in Yoshihi's hand; before entering the field, the two of them talked with each other.

The silly memories from childhood, the young Yoshihi often played in this wooden Myouken Temple.

*"Yoshiharu. I understand the reason why you've called me over to the Shimazu Four Sisters' meeting. To forget my antagonism and accept Tokuchiyo, isn't that right? You, however, hesitated to protest bluntly from your mouth, because you didn't know the circumstances. So it's like that."*

*"That's right. There was that time with Nobuna. That; because I am unable to understand the heart of the one I face against; without thinking about the consequences, I have repeatedly made very insensitive remarks. I don't know the circumstances between you and Tokuchiyo-chan. Perhaps I should've been able to find out the circumstance if it were true, but there wasn't any time."*

*“Wasn’t there anxiety at the thought that the Shimazu Four Sisters would’ve quarreled and the meeting would break down?”*

*“That’s not it. There will always be a slight quarrel happening between sisters in each and every passing house. Even in my family—the Sagara kindergarten army [younger sister corps]—there are some terrible things that happen.”*

*“You trust them. To be honest, I am envious of those four sisters. I can’t choose the family that I will be born in. It is also my destiny to be born in this world as the princess of the Sagara Clan.”*

*“Yoshiharu. You knew the outcome of the Battle of Kizakihara. You probably know the continuation of that as well. What will happen to me after this?”* Yoshihi sat down on a bench, thereafter speaking these words as she spread the written oath that was more important than her life.

*“... After losing to the Shimazu Clan, Sagara Yoshihi will fight Kai Soun under the order of the Shimazu Clan. That’s your fate. You must not take up your position in Hibiki-no-Hara. There will be death when your retreat on the river is blocked in the ravine of the valley.”*

*“Hibiki-no-Hara? You are foolish, to tell me the most dangerous area to be defeated in. After all, I will be defeated by uncle Soun as expected.”*

*“It’s alright. The future is never fixed. It surely can be changed under some parameters. It can be avoided. Have a strong will to avoid that destiny.”*

*“How, I wonder? My situation is all converged into one fate,”* Yoshihi laughed.

*“Even if I fall, Sagara Yoshiharu. As long as there is you, the Shimazu Clan will not dissolve the Sagara Clan. In an emergency, I will ask Tokuchiyo. I can’t beg for anything from Uncle Soun who has become my enemy. But don’t let Tokuchiyo inherit the Sagara Clan. You will be the one to inherit the Sagara Clan as its 19<sup>th</sup> head.”*

*“What?”*

*“Don’t hesitate. You are originally the descendant of the Sagara Clan. If you who are a chief retainer of the Oda Clan get along with the Shimazu Clan well, you will overcome this war-ravaged age and protect the Sagara Clan. In other words, Tokuchiyo’s life.”*

*“Yoshihi. Those words are totally like a testament.”*

*“Grow your kindergarten army. Bring up a large number of brethren. In the Sagara family which doesn’t have any internal clan trouble [No internal clan trouble, but a fucked up familial interaction; is that it?], you should be able to make a new family. At that time, you will become a person of this*

*world, perfectly. You will be able to overcome your homesickness and the desire to see your mother again."*

Yoshiharu held his breath.

That was because the tense and serenely fierce expression had disappeared from Yoshihi's face.

It was a gentle look similar to Tokuchiyo; like two peas in a pod.

*"You intend to die, Yoshihi?"*

*"How could that be? But I can say this. I have finally found the reason of my birth. It is all thanks to you, Sagara Yoshiharu."*

*"That transparent smile. I have seen one before. Right before Takenaka Hanbei fell down from illness, she had showed me that smile."*

*"Time passes to the future from the past. Life also connects the past to the future. If I can't grasp the truth, then I shall choose the future without hesitation."*

*"It's not like that, Yoshihi. It's possible to reach it. Even if it's impossible to do it alone; with two, three, or four people, it will be possible."*

*"If I survive, I will be married to you. You will disappear. All the things you have done in this world will be in vain. Everyone will forget your will. On the other hand, if I die, you will survive. My memory will be remain in you, and Tokuchiyo. Which one is better? I will not hesitate about it,"* Yoshihi took Yoshiharu's hand, and laughed.

*"Please don't give up! Both of us must survive at the end. It shall not be just one. As long as we can persuade Yoshihiro, the wedding will be canceled. The reason why it was difficult was because she didn't hold any malice, but because she was not being spiteful that I can do something about it. If I die, will it end here? If I survive, what it will be?"*

*"Yoshiharu. Your mother must be a gentle person. I want to see her once."*

*"Eh...? My mother? She is kinda like Tokuchiyo. Bright and cheerful, she is a gentle person."*

*She is similar to you at how her and your smiles have overlapped just now,* Yoshiharu felt embarrassed, unable to say so.

Yoshiharu regretted that hesitation immediately.

*"Fufufu. As expected, everything seems to be destined."*

*“What kind of thing is that?”*

Yoshihi didn't answer, and, instead, looked up at the sacred tree that towered across the main hall.

Unconsciously, Yoshiharu followed Yoshihi's gaze.

Yoshiharu noticed that Yoshihi had suddenly burned the written will that she held in her hands...

*“I want to see the world outside Kyushu. I'm a bird kept in a cage, inside the Sagara Clan. It's one of the reasons why I have never lived for my own sake.”*

*“The one that you've burnt is your written oath.”*

*“Ah, this is good. After I die in battle, it will have been impossible to marry you. With this, you will survive.”*

*“It's no good! Give me one more chance! I will not make the blunder from Kizakihara again! Make me a strategist next time, or a soldier, or a scout, or even a supply troop is fine or anything! Let me go to the battlefield!”* [Grammatical violation is natural here.]

*“Fufufu. I don't think you can defeat Uncle Soun. There will be no luck like it did in Hitoyoshi Castle. If you meet Uncle Soun at the battlefield, there will be no discussion, and you will be killed without question.”*

Yoshiharu couldn't refute. It was mortifying. The Shura among Shuras who had become a killing machine—Kai Soun—brought his spear up and his forces and entered the battlefield. It was overwhelmingly insufficient for Yoshiharu.

*“Don't make such a face, Yoshiharu. The difference in military power between you and that person isn't your fault. There is too much difference in your upbringing.”*

*“Yoshihi. Even if I don't have military skills, I can still fight Kai Soun with the Shimazu Clan.”*

*“Say, Yoshiharu.”*

*“What?”*

*“It's a very cruel fate if you disappear because you join hands with me. Finally, will you give me a goodbye kiss?”*

*“Ah, no. It's no good. I will disappear just by kissing you.”*

*“What’s up with that? How boring... It seems that I have been born under a very unlucky star.”*

*“I’m sorry. It’s normal for Americans to kiss family members. Because it is different from Japanese customs, it won’t be a problem.”*

*“W-Well, it’s only a joke. Don’t take it seriously. Well, it’s time for me to move.”*

Yoshiharu finally understood.

*Yoshihi probably wanted to start a new life by marrying me. A way of life different from her former life, in which she has always been frightened of the clan rebellion against the whole family as the head of Hitoyoshi Castle who protects the Sagara Clan. She might have been holding on such hope, even if it were ordered by the Shimazu Clan. For some reason, she doesn’t mind having me as her marriage partner. With the illegitimate child born on the same day as she became the head of the Sagara Clan. The incompatible relationship with Tokuchiyo caused by her birth could also be changed.*

*“Wait a second, Yoshihi. Did you possibly mean to...”*

*“Ah, Yoshiharu. You should stop being a careless, soft-hearted person. Though you might be reluctant, you should prioritize the people you want to protect. A small daimyo of Southern Higo in a corner of Kyushu over the one who reigns the whole world in order to subjugate the world of the Sengoku era. Which one is more important to the future of Japan’s people? Didn’t you come to this Sengoku era for Oda Nobuna’s sake? Or maybe, your feelings for Oda Nobuna can be shaken at this degree?”*

*“... It’s... It’s different. I don’t intend to leave Nobuna. But still, I...”*

*“You are a retainer and the lover of Oda Nobuna. Then quickly meet Otomo Sorin and save Oda Nobuna from her crisis. Do not waste any more time for me who am only a rural daimyo of Higo, you idiot!”*

*“Now, before my eyes, is a princess general who is going to meet her fated death! I can’t make any priority! How could I abandon you when I am facing such a difficult situation? Besides, your existence resembles my mother.”*

*“No, I’m not your mother; put it in a bear pot and stew it!”*

*“Even if you are not my mother, aren’t we close? We are an ancestor and a descendant.”*

*“It’s not even close. Because you and I are not related by blood.”*

*“Because we are both connected, if we are tied together, I will disappear.”*

*“No. To speak accurately, rather than to say that the blood between you and me stops being connected, it’s more like, ‘We’re not supposed to be connected in the first place;’ that is the correct history.”*

*“I have no idea what are you saying; my head is dumb. Anyway! Don’t leave me, Yoshihi!”*

*“No, I haven’t made any child. Tokuchiyo should’ve been your direct ancestor! That is the original fate! The fate settles in the place where it should be!”*

*“Yoshihi. I was embarrassed for an instant, and hesitated to tell you what I should’ve said to you.”*

*“Farewell, Sagara Yoshiharu. You must live for Oda Nobuna’s dream. I am happy that I’ve met you.”*

Yoshihi stood up. Yoshiharu tried to stop her.

This time, someone’s fist struck Yoshiharu’s solar plexus.

Yoshiharu was taken by surprise, and then inevitably lost his consciousness. He was carried on the back of Goemon’s, who had suddenly appeared from the bottom, shoulders.

*“Sorry for the trouble,”* Yoshihi nodded.

*“Ninja. Sagara Yoshiharu is the successor of my Sagara Clan. I will not allow him to enter this battle. It should make you happy if you bring him to Otomo Sorin as soon as you’ve brought him back to the Shimazu Clan. I believe that the Shimazu Clan thinks that they could send reserve forces if I gain some time, but they won’t be able to make it. It’s because Uncle Soun follows the same path as Otomo Sorin’s; she would advance to Hyuga with all of her forces. Although Otomo Sorin is certainly indecisive, the Namban strategist who unbelievably used that artifact to kill Yoshiharu is an able person who can exceed the Shimazu 4 Sisters’ imagination. There is no time left.”*

*“Another Sagara. To protect my lord from defeat is remarkable and good for us. But are you alright with this? What do you feel about this?”* [The translation of Goemon’s speeches is unverified.]

*“As what Sagara-uji always says, a man must take the role of the battlefield, instead of women, and not the opposite,”* Goemon further said so as to supplement her question.

*“That is just a man’s selfish way. Even a woman can die for her man. Especially, for my own descendant, I won’t hesitate,”* Yoshihi muttered.

*"I will be the substitute to die in this battle; the descendant must prosper. Yoshiharu and Tokuchiyo must survive."*

*"Another Sagara. That prayer will surely be delivered to Hokuto-no-Mikoto [God of the Big Dipper constellation] from Myouken Temple."*

*"In order to keep Yoshiharu from disappearing, I must commit suicide here; but then, I would abandon the Shimazu Clan in order to obstruct the enemy movement and wouldn't fight against Uncle Soun. Because... I have decided that I have wanted to be defeated by Uncle Soun from the very beginning. From the day that Uncle Soun saved my life."*

*"I can understand your viewpoint. But once he wakes up, Sagara-uji will surely run to the battlefield. That is certain."*

*"No. Even if he has small troops, Uncle Soun can't be surpassed. Do not underestimate the strongest Shura of Kyushu. So, this is a farewell."*

Goemon, shouldering Yoshiharu, went off without any sound.

However, there was another person whom Yoshihi must meet lastly.

*"Since when have you been hiding, Tokuchiyo? I know that you have been there from the very beginning,"* Yoshihi spoke to Tokuchiyo who was hiding in the forest temple.

*"... Aneue."*

Tokuchiyo who was wearing a bear skin armor showed up to Yoshihi.

*"An ungraceful appearance as always. Have you heard all of it? You are Yoshiharu's ancestor, and not me."*

*"Eh? That isn't possible! Yoshiharu is from aneue."*

*"Yoshiharu's mother closely resembles you, but not me."*

*"No, aneue's smile just now resembles that of Yoshiharu's mother. I was going to say that, but I got too embarrassed to say it,"* Tokuchiyo continued to talk. [Seriously, how dafuq did you know that?]

Once gain, the feeling of reunion between the sisters was savored slowly. Tokuchiyo spoke without pause as she observed Yoshihi's reaction.

She kept on talking fast, as if to vent all of her emotions.

*"Tokuchiyo. That sultry way of speaking. Aren't you and Yoshiharu similar by that? Meddlesome and hot-blooded. Lacking any dignity, but having a cheerful smile. A character loved by people because of their sincere stupidity. To always dash forward without thinking*

*about the consequences. Conversely, a clever and noble liar like me is not similar with Yoshiharu in personality or appearance at all. We are completely opposite, like water and oil."*

*"There is no such thing! Aneue was just wearing the mask of the head of the Sagara Clan! I know it. You became the head of the clan at a young age. With the rebellion against the clan caused by your expulsion from Hitoyoshi Castle, aneue must've been wearing a mask to show no mercy to those who'd rebel. So you were acting like a ruthless person, but that is just acting. Didn't aneue save me and a lot of people from Kai Soun's purge?"*

*"That's clearly a misunderstanding, Tokuchiyo. I was clumsy, and let the people who rebelled escape; such thing shall never happen twice. It's only that..."*

*"No. Yoshiharu told me. Aneue didn't try to murder nor banish me from home! If aneue really hates me, it should be impossible for me to be nearby! Actually, I thought of leaving to Satsuma or Hyuga soon, to disappear from aneue. If aneue really thinks of me as an obstacle, then I shall withdraw quietly. But Yoshiharu's words have shaken my delusion off."*

*"Hmph, Yoshiharu is a soft-hearted and meddlesome person. It's the same as you, the relative of a fool. But I am different. Because I am the daughter of the lawful wife of the Sagara Clan's head. The one who possesses the ruthlessness of those who oppose their family. You are no more than a beloved illegitimate child..."*

*How thoughtless of me. Tokuchiyo has been shaken by my words. I've probably said too much, Yoshihi clicked her tongue.*

*Tokuchiyo became pale.*

*"... Can you say that, it's, not a lie? If you say yes, then, I will never reappear to aneue, ever again..."*

*"..."*

*Yoshihi couldn't say yes or no.*

*No, it's a lie, she intended to cut it off right now.*

*If I blurt my feelings out, I would make Tokuchiyo sad for her entire life.*

*However, I ought to say it.*

*Because, for the last time, I've seen Tokuchiyo.*

*However, no words can come out.*

*But, At the very least, I wanted to talk to Tokuchiyo, not as the head of the Sagara Clan, but as my own self, when she thought so, tears flowed down.*

However, it was an unbearable thought. Yoshihi was going to be killed soon. She wasn't supposed to leave such emotion to Tokuchiyo.

*"I'm sorry. Because I'm stupid, I've said terrible things to aneue. Aneue. I will continue to adore aneue,"* Tokuchiyo tried to grasp Yoshihi's hand.

However, Yoshihi ran away from Tokuchiyo and rushed up to her favorite horse that was harnessed on the sacred tree.

*"Tokuchiyo. You are to reserve the Sagara Clan's blood for the future of Yoshiharu. I'll just return everything to how it should've been."*

*"Wait, aneue. When you said that you were anticipating for this conclusion, you were happy."*

*"... Foolish imouto. Can an elder sister drag her younger sister to her ruin? I will be happy with that statement."*

*"What?"*

Tokuchiyo trembled with emotions. For the first time, her elder sister said such gentle words. She had been finally recognized as a family. Because of too much joy, her mind went blank. But, just when she became aware that she would be separated from Yoshihi, Yoshihi was already on horseback.

*"We are parting here, Tokuchiyo. If you follow me, because you have been judged to have no ability to survive in the Kyushu of Sengoku era, you will be executed as a rebel. If both sisters die without leaving a child, then Sagara Yoshiharu will disappear. But I am serious."*

Those were the words that Yoshihi left.

However, Tokuchiyo did surrender.

This was because Yoshiharu's words were proven right.

*It is as Yoshiharu has said. My onee-sama does not hate me. There should be a reason that couldn't be said to me, that I was kept away for a long time. Because onee-sama must keep me away, she overdid it. Then, I will not hesitate anymore! To the very end...*

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The Shimazu 4 Sisters, who had left Satsuma and Uchi Castle in order to mobilize the reserve army, stood on the Kumagawa Basin, waiting for the buildup of the troops scattered all over Hyuga.

The Hyuga Province which the Ito Clan had left was very large.

The Satsuma soldiers were dividing Hyuga with their utmost effort.

The military power remaining in the hands of the Shimazu 4 Sisters only accounted for 200.

Moreover, the soldiers dispatched to Hyuga still hadn't returned at all, or maybe couldn't return.

Otomo Sorin, who had accepted the Ito Clan that had sought asylum, suddenly declared that she would reclaim the former territory of the Ito Clan and build a kingdom of God at Hyuga. They had started to move a large battalion to attack Hyuga.

It was much faster than Toshihisa's expectations.

It was a wise decision that couldn't be thought of by the indecisive Otomo Sorin.

The Otomo Clan was divided into pro-Christian and anti-Christian factions.

It should've taken one more month before they could decide on dispatching their troops and suppressing the opposition within the clan.

Whether the four sisters would rush to Hyuga; or join Sagara Yoshihi, as a reserve army, who had begun their battle against Kai Soun; or order Sagara Yoshihi to withdraw; all of these had to be decided quickly.

Since the wake of morning, a meeting went on within the camp.

*"I will not let the Japanese be divided and fight each other because of the Namban! I will protect the Shimazu family who hold high regard to the Imperial Court!"* Sakihisa Konoe who was fired up went to the large army, all by himself; but because of the failure of the Operation "4 Sisters Seduction," there wouldn't be much to expect from him.

*"Yoshihisa-nee, at this rate, we wouldn't be able to send any reserve troops to Sagara Yoshihi."*

*"If we turn ourselves around, we would leave Sagara Yoshihi to die on her own. Although that certainly is a wicked deed, it will leave a bad aftertaste."*

*"Anesha. We have no way but to command a retreat for Sagara Yoshihi."*

*“Yoshihiro-nee. The Sagara army has no way to retreat anymore. I assume that Sagara Yoshihi has left the safe spot on the mountain and spread out at the Valley of Hibiki-no-Hara. Therefore, they will be beleaguered by Kai Soun from the front.”*

*“What did you do, Toshihisa? Isn’t that like she wants to commit suicide? Sagara Yoshihi should’ve been taught with military knowledge by Kai Soun; I was in danger and nearly defeated in Kizakihara too!”*

*“I don’t know,”* at the same time as Toshihisa’s shoulders drooped, Iehisa barged in.

*“Sagara has returned! He was knocked unconscious by Sagara Yoshihi and sent here back.”*

Yoshiharu, who was refused of entry to the battlefield by Sagara Yoshihi and sent back along with Tokuchiyo, who was wearing a bear skin armor; they were both guided by Iehisa in to the camp.

*“I’m sorry! Yoshihi can’t be detained! The one who is wearing a bear headgear is Yoshihi’s imouto, Tokuchiyo.”*

*“Thank you! Please send out the reserve troops to my aneue! I will serve the Shimazu for my entire life if you save aneue! Even if I become a slave, anything...!”*

*“The younger sister’s mother is different from the elder sister’s!”* Iehisa hoped to be an assistance to Tokuchiyo since their circumstances were similar.

Besides, Iehisa was loved by her three elder sisters, raised as a Shimazu sister, and spoiled by her sisters; but Tokuchiyo was immediately chased out from Hitoyoshi Castle after she had been born, and it was said that she lived in the Yatsushiro Mountain.

But Tokuchiyo earnestly adored her elder sister Yoshihi.

Therefore, Iehisa brought Tokuchiyo in front of her three elder sisters.

*“Is the reason why Sagara Yoshihi wants to face death because she is in a dilemma concerning Kai Soun and the Shimazu Clan? Or is it because she doesn’t want Sagara Yoshiharu to die?”*

Yoshihisa’s expression was full of bitterness. There were no troops that could be used as the reserve forces. They must enter Hyuga quickly and obstruct the large allied army. *“We can’t send any reserve force out. Sagara Yoshihi has no choice but to die,”* even with such a cruel decision, Yoshihisa still couldn’t paint herself a villain.

Tokuchiyo’s petition was ignored. Iehisa who sympathized with Tokuchiyo also felt hurt. She was afraid that her elder sister had become heartless.

She couldn't be able to say that Yoshihi would die, no matter what, when she thought about it.

*"Sagara Yoshiharu. You are under the Shimazu Clan right now, but you were the Oda Clan's messenger who was supposed to go to Otomo Sorin. I thought that you could buy us some time."*

*"Yoshihisa. The Otomo Clan's advancement is fast, and I know that there is no reserve army that could be sent. Yoshihi expected it too. It's because a Namban strategist, Gaspard, is under Otomo Sorin. In order for me to be thrown to Yatsushiro. Gaspard used Chosokabe, Kobayakawa-san, and other princess generals in Western Japan undetected. He forcefully made me meet Yoshihi to eliminate me. That person can predict the future to some extent. Therefore, I, who am a person from the future, am his natural enemy."*

*"The Shimazu Clan has also unwittingly taken part in that. You would've been eliminated if we'd made you marry Yoshihi. We were helping Gaspard eliminate his natural enemy without us noticing."*

*"It was an accident that I was captured by the Shimazu Clan; perhaps fate was on Gaspard's side."*

*"Anesha. Although I don't believe in foretelling, that person Gaspard is a considerably excellent schemer. It's different from the former Otomo Clan that lacked any essential strategist even if they were served by Tachibana Dosetsu's vassal clan. If there is a person who is more resourceful than Yoshihisa in the Otomo Clan, the more we couldn't abandon Hyuga. If we don't enter Hyuga to establish a front, it would become irreparable. The Shimazu Clan must protect Kyushu from the Namban," Yoshihiro made a sound argument that was difficult to say on behalf of her elder sister.*

*"Yoshihiro. In the Otomo Clan, there is my friend, Kuroda Kanbei. If it were Kanbei, then the worst scenario could be prevented. A little is also fine, but can't I request a contingent force to go to Hibiki-no-Hara?"*

*"Sagara Yoshiharu. Why are you so fixated on Sagara Yoshihi's life to that extent? By your strange logic, wouldn't you disappear if you and Yoshihi married? But because I don't believe in such doubtful concept, I didn't cancel the wedding. This might be the only moment now when you can survive. If Yoshihi dies, wouldn't you still be able to stay in the world in this Sengoku era? Is it also good to disappear for Yoshihi's sake? But what about Oda Nobuna? Are you choosing Sagara Yoshihi over Oda Nobuna?"*

*"Thinking about the cancellation of the wedding after saving Yoshihi's life. I am impudent in anywhere I go."*

*"You protected Yoshihi because she is your ancestor."*

*"Of course, there is also that. But it is also because Yoshihi is a girl. Because she is a princess general."*

Yoshihiro recognized Yoshiharu's great spirit, nodding silently.

*"Say all the things you want to say, I will hear all of it,"* she signaled him with her gaze.

*"Yoshihi has been asking for the reason why she was born. She wasn't even permitted to be Tokuchiyo's sister. I don't know why it wasn't allowed. It was all her grandfather's intention to drive out Tokuchiyo from Hitoyoshi Castle. It wasn't her volition. Yoshihi protected me by facing death, and entrusted me with the Sagara Clan and Tokuchiyo. I believe that she thinks that her purpose is to die in my place. But I will never accept it! I will prevent that! I will make Yoshihi look forward for herself and convince her this time!"*

*"Sagara Yoshih knows that she is destined to be unable to love you as a woman. Therefore, at least as your ancestor... As an existence like an older sister or a mother. She may be showing her love to you by sacrificing herself, in order to protect you. If that is the case, we should let her do as she wish. As for a once-in-a-lifetime selfishness, Yoshihi was able to find the meaning of her life at last; her heart will be peaceful now."*

*"I know that! But my heart can't calm down! I absolutely can't let Yoshihi end her life!"*

*"... Even if you are to disappear from this world as the result?"*

*"Oh. Even if I disappear, I am convinced that my will won't disappear. Surely the evidence that I have lived is left on a corner of someone's heart. If I abandon Yoshihi here and survive, my resolve will die. I don't want to become a man who'd leave Yoshihi on her own in favor to Nobuna."*

*"Sagara Yoshiharu. You are determined to that extent. There shouldn't be any relations between you and this era."*

*"Then I have no right to live in this era. But it's not like that anymore. It's not something others can decide. I am going to decide it myself! The man whom I admire said that!"*

*"The man you admire, who is he?"*

*"Kobayakawa's big brother, Mori Takamoto, who was neither strong in combat nor intelligent. He was an existence who hid behind his sisters' shadow and wasn't an outstanding person. He was a man who could laugh and die for his sisters anytime. The man who moved the pirate king, Murakami Takeyoshi, and led the Battle of Itsukushima to his victory. And, along with his words, died soon, advancing towards the Sengoku era!"*

At that time, the men of Satsuma Hayato who matched a thousand men, gathering outside the central camp, listened to Yoshiharu's thunderous loud voice.

*“Mori Takamoto boarded upon the Murakami Navy’s fleet to defend his younger sister and said these words as he drank poison!” Yoshiharu shouted.*

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*Murakami pirates! You have seen my younger sisters’ desperate figures. Don’t you feel shame as men, while these young princess generals are struggling to pacify this era of war?! A pirate or samurai, that’s not the problem! We are the same people of Japan! How could a man let women and children fight forever as he himself lives in laziness?!*

*Besides, I can’t calmly temper myself when I see my younger sisters, who share my blood and flesh, in the scene of carnage; I’ve always been ashamed of my mediocrity for having to leave battles and strategies to my younger sisters. Therefore, I will die for the sake of my younger sisters.*

*My life is my weapon.*

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*“Mori Takamoto was poisoned, and died.”*

*“Yes. But Mori Takamoto’s will isn’t dead. It lives inside Kobayakawa and Kikkawa. And I who came from the future have inherited it. I have never met him, but I think I have inherited his will on the moment I heard it from Murakami-jiisan. Even if I disappear, surely not all is forgotten. I must not abandon my will until the last moment. Shimazu Yoshihiro, it’s probably transmitted to you, and you may have inherited it.”*

*Yoshiharu laughed, streaking no hint of flattery.*

*When Mori Takamoto died, perhaps he was laughing in this way, Yoshihiro thought.*

*“Because of the foresight in my mind, I insist that he who is a strange man, and who came from the future, doesn’t have the right to interfere in our world,” Yoshihiro was ashamed.*

*At the same time, this person’s smile took something important hidden in my heart just now. I had such a comfortable feeling.*

*Iehisa has been longing for love all this time, I've suddenly noticed that it is probably like this feeling. I am awfully confused.*

*"Sagara Yoshiharu. You are indeed a brave man. A brave man shouldn't lower his head like this."*

Yoshihiro blushed, and then stood up.

She lifted the kneeling Yoshiharu and grasped his hands.

*"You are a retainer of the Oda Clan 'til the last. A guest general of the Sagara Clan. You are not inferior to the Shimazu Clan. Please don't request help from us. Please say, 'Let's fight together!'"*

*"Then. Will you send a reserve force?"*

*"Sagara Yoshiharu. Though you earnestly struggled to heal Iehisa's wounded heart, we sent Sagara Yoshihi to her death. On the contrary, I have my own way as an elder sister and let Sagara Yoshihi die without healing her. I was one step behind Toshihisa during the horse riding incident. Even if I will be burdened with the guilt of the Shimazu Clan this time, I may have gone too far ahead. And before that, I've labeled you as an outsider of this country until now and been ridiculing you. Please forgive my rude and improper words."* [Previously, she had been addressing Yoshiharu with "kisama." At this juncture, she addressed him with "anata," which implies her apparent respect.]

*"No, you haven't made any improper words. You are the Takegami, Shimazu Yoshihiro, who shines brilliantly in the Sengoku era. It's your role to single-mindedly fight the enemy on the battlefield."*

*"Is that so? Is fighting is my existence?"*

*"Yes. You are an admirable existence to me who doesn't understand anything about martial arts. But, thank you."*

*"... That sneaky smiling face. There is no helping it. If we would be able to save Sagara Yoshihi at dawn, I might cancel your wedding as well."*

*"Eh? Why? You don't believe in superstition, right?"*

*"Yes. I don't believe it. I don't want to see such annoying scene anymore... No, it's alright. Fufufufu."*

*"Y-Yoshihiro-chan? Why has your character suddenly changed? After all, the role of stylishly sending out the reserve forces should belong to you, onee-sama?"* Yoshihisa who had become teary-eyed nudged Toshihisa.

*“Sagara Yoshiharu is different from Konoe-sama who exploits beauty and petty schemes to seduce a princess general; it’s troublesome since this guy does it naturally. Perhaps this might become a troublesome thing, onee-sama,”* Toshihisa pressed her finger to her temple, enduring a headache.

*“Nyaa? Yoshihiro-nee-chan, what’s with your strange look just now? Rather, release Sagara’s hands right now!”* Iehisa forcefully cut in between Yoshiharu and Yoshihiro.

*“W-What is it? What’s wrong, Iehisa? I was just showing my courtesy to this brave man.”*

*“Nyaa nyaa! Ever since that tea ceremony we had at the capital, it has always been my place to stand next to Sagara! I will not hand it over to Yoshihiro-nee-chan!”*

*“I-I-Iehisa. Why are you looking with me like that? Surely you haven’t come to hate me, right? Why is it... Please stop looking at me with those burglar cat-like eyes! I won’t be able to endure it!”*

The camp’s curtain had opened, the men of Satsuma Hayato gathered around the main camp. *“Well said, Sagara boy,” “We have been summoned here, and we are not going to sit here silently, we’re gonna do it,”* Tokuchiyo who saw that spectacle rose up suddenly, noticing something.

*“The morale is high. But the number isn’t enough. Although we’ve gotten the reserve army as we have asked, now that it’s become like this... It’s like compelling them to die in the battlefield. How will you do it? Yoshiharu?”*

*“Yes. That is right. All of them are much fewer than I’ve thought.”*

*“Well! Defeating a large number with a smaller number of troops is the way of the Shimazu!”* Iehisa tapped her chest with a pop.

Though, afterwards, *“It hurts,”* she became teary-eyed at how painful it was.

*“Nonchalantly bringing her chest up which is bigger than mine, yet it still keeps growing larger for Sagara Yoshiharu. Such a sly younger sister,”* Toshihisa clicked her tongue.

Iehisa, *“By the princess’s command,”* all the men of Satsuma Hayato stood up simultaneously and took their spears up high, pointing to the heavens.

*“It is the way of military arts to overturn the differences in combat force. Sagara Yoshiharu is already a part of the Shimazu Clan. We’ve promised to bring out the reserve army to Sagara Yoshihi by all means! We can only go! When are we going to go but now?! We don’t just fight now; we fight anytime!”*

*“Oh! Sagara Yoshiharu, who came from the capital along with Hime-sama, looked cool a moment ago!”*

*“We are the strongest samurais of the Sengoku era, the Satsuma Hayato!”*

*“March to Kai Soun earlier than Sagara Yoshihi’s troops!”*

*“Hey, Sagara Yoshiharu! Tokuchiyo-chan! This is Satsuma’s specialty—Akumaki! Please eat it!”*

*“Have a meal before war!”*

*“Tokuchiyo-chan is like a wild child.”*

*“Everyone... Thank you!”*

*“The Akumaki!”* Yoshiharu and Tokuchiyo were tossed upon with it, receiving it.

*“Iehisa? What is this? Is this the rumored Chinko-dango?”* [I hear a tsukkomi \*It’s shinki-dango!\*

*Akumaki. It’s a food made from glutinous rice boiled with lye. Because it can be preserved for a long time, we always take it to the battlefield.”*

*“Lye? Oh, it’s surprisingly delicious.”*

*“There is food other than bear meat, fish, and nuts after a long time! Amu amu amu amu~.”* [It’s an onomatopoeia of eating food]

*“You also need to take carbohydrates, Tokuchiyo-chan!”*

*“Eat without reserve! Eat it! You can take another fill!”*

When Yoshiharu’s feelings intensified, he let out a loud voice. The voices seemed to have unexpectedly attracted the men of Satsuma Hayato because it sounded as if the soul of Mori Takamori resided in it.

*“Already yearned for like he is an old acquaintance by the young male soldiers. Sheeesh. People like him are more terrible than a villain,”* Yoshihisa noticed this, smiling wryly.

*“The 4 Sisters’ opinions have matched; the conclusion has been reached,”* Toshihisa nodded.

*“There isn’t time to spare. Anesha, the present head of the Shimazu Clan, will give out the order.”*

*“Leave it to me. My spotlight has arrived.”*

Shimazu Yoshihisa brandished the war fan in her hands. Her expression had changed completely. From the face of the eldest sister of the Shimazu 4 Sisters into the face of the family head of the Shimazu Clan. It was the expression of a Sengoku daimyo that'd fought at the world of Shuras—Kyushu.

*“The Shimazu Four Sisters’ meeting has concluded, and thus shifts to a tactical meeting now! Establish position in Hibiki-no-Hara to rescue Sagara Yoshihi who has been surrounded by the enemies! We’ll fight a decisive battle against Kai Soun and his undefeated Kyushu war record. Everyone, prepare for it!”*

*“All right, anesha!”*

*“Nyaa!”*

*“Toshihisa, battle report!”*

Toshihisa opened the map of the battlefield geography and began to arrange the pieces.

*“Adding his own army, the master of the Aso Clan has sent 2,000 soldiers as reinforcements for Kai Soun who has sallied forth from Mifune Castle. The 500 soldiers of Sagara Yoshiharu has left the headquarters in Yatshushiro and gone down the mountain pass; they have advanced across the river and taken up position at Hibiki-no-Hara which is surrounded by mountains from all directions. Kai Soun has taken advantage of the darkness of the night, and divided his troops into two in the shape of a pincer movement to entrap Yoshihi from the north and south. Moreover, it’s not an ordinary pincer movement.”*

*“The detached army has been arranged to become a wall, obstructing Shimazu’s reserve army from the south. In addition, fake soldiers are placed at many places as an ambush. It’s probably a measure against the Tsuru no Buse,”* Toshihisa analyzed the battle situation indifferently like a machine.

*“It’s plausible that Kai Soun’s only purpose is Sagara Yoshihi who has broken the written oath. He’s paying no attention to the Shimazu army and has lined his troops up to attack Sagara Yoshihi’s main camp. Therefore, Kai Soun took position in the north side where he couldn’t engage the Shimazu army directly. When the time comes, they will remove the detached force in the south side, intending to attack Sagara Yoshihi’s main camp. Since he won’t be lured by the bait which is the Shimazu army, the Tsuru no Buse wouldn’t succeed, even if it’s possible to deal with the ambushes there.”*

*“As one would expect from the strongest Shura, there is no hesitation on the battle formation. Moreover, the number of soldiers is large,”* Yoshiharu groaned.

*“It’s unexpected that the Aso Clan has given all of their power on this onslaught. It’s strange. But there is no suspicion on the master of the Aso Clan entrusting all of his forces on Kai Soun. When Kai Soun’s three sons were accused of rebellion, the father killed his own sons.”*

*“At any rate, with only this amount of troops being the reserve army, it will only be kicked around by Kai Soun who is leading an army. Iehisa! Think of a tactic to win this battle.”*

*“Yes, Yoshihiro-nee-chan! At this time, Tsuru no Buse can’t be used. Since Kai Soun is going straight to Sagara Yoshihi’s main base, there will be some leeway for the enemy to attack in a slow ‘round robin’ movement! At any rate, we should immediately exploit this moment to rush towards Sagara Yoshihi’s main camp as soon as possible! Sagara, if you can get to Yoshihi faster than Kai Soun, you may be able to take her back! Use the ‘Drill and Extract!’”*

*“Drill and Extract?”*

*“Nyaa? Sagara doesn’t know? First, spread the armies into a column, then the general who spearheads it will make a central breakthrough. When a soldier in the front falls down, the following soldier will rotate, replacing the first soldier. All in order to break down the enemies’ position until their life is exhausted. It’s a reverse honorable death.”*

*“Compelling honorable death to the men of Satsuma Hayato for me? That is extreme as one would expect.”*

*“Hey, doesn’t the future man regret his own life, but regrets the soldiers’ lives? Kid, this is Sengoku era,” the men of Satsuma laughed as they chewed their akumaki.*

*“It’s bad. I know you guys don’t fear death. But I remembered Kanegasaki, and unintentionally...”*

*“Nyaa. It’s me who came out with this tactic. As the person who made the suggestion, I shall advance next to Sagara. The one leading is Sagara, and I will defend him. When I fail at making a breakdown, I will die along with the other young soldiers. Ahahaha!”*

*“Eh? That is no good! The enemy is out of our league! Yoshihiro, stop her!”*

*“No. Iehisa is no longer a child. If a tactic that one has devised on their own fails, they must take responsibility to fight and die. The tactician is such a person.”*

*“Y-Yoshihiro...”*

*“Don’t worry. I am the Takegami of Satsuma. If it’s a fight in the battlefield, then I have a plan. I won’t let Iehisa die easily.”*

*“What are you planning?”*

*“I will also lead the charge. The sister shall sally forth along with Iehisa. Isn’t it good, Aneua? Toshihisa?”*

*“I have no objection,”* Toshihisa nodded, and Yoshihisa declared her decision.

*“Iehisa, Yoshihiro, go! Run faster than Kai Soun! Escort Sagara Yoshiharu to Sagara Yoshihi!”*

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The Shimazu army was only 200 soldiers.

The 200 soldiers were aiming for Hibiki-no-Hara and advanced harmoniously as they bellowed a cry of a wild monkey.

Leading the vanguard was Sagara Yoshiharu and Shimazu Iehisa.

Then immediately followed by Shimazu Yoshihiro.

However, there was no appearance of Tokuchiyo. *“It’s impossible for a princess without actual fighting experience to do to the breakthrough on the enemy,”* Toshihisa stopped her. *“I acknowledge your swordsmanship. However, even if knowledge about the Taisha-Ryu style has been acquired, you can’t survive with only one-on-one swordplay in the battlefield where there is a large amount of soldiers mixed together,”* since she was persuaded politely, Tokuchiyo couldn’t have her own way.

At this point, Tokuchiyo seemed to have noticed for the first time that Yoshihi was always putting her on a safe zone and protected her from the whirlpool of battle in Southern Higo.

Yoshiharu, *“You must survive,”* conveyed those words to her as Tokuchiyo saw Yoshiharu off.

On the south side of Hibiki-no-Hara, the detached army arranged by Kai Soun to block the Shimazu army numbered 1000 soldiers.

Furthermore, the main unit under the direct control of Kai Soun should have been included in the detachment force originally. In fact, the units led by Kai Soun was on the north side now.

He judged that the 200 soldiers of the Shimazu army would be tough, even more than the 500 soldiers of the Sagara Clan.

It was the expression of determination from Kai Soun to not to let Shimazu's reserve forces show themselves.

Soon, the figure of the enemies who were trying to establish out a stronghold and engage the Shimazu army could be seen. The troops on the left wing seemed to be ready to flee slightly, but the elite units trained by Kai Soun had assumed position on the center.

There wasn't a slight opening. And the Shimazu army must breakthrough the center.

*"Speaking of which, Goemon has disappeared again. Is she guarding Tokuchiyo?"*  
Yoshiharu suddenly noticed.

*"Oh well, she is always an elusive person. It's a usual thing for her to disappear suddenly."*

*"Sagara."*

Iehisa showed an innocent smile, riding her horse like a charging gale.

*"Yes? What happened? If you are hungry, then have some Akumaki. It's really delicious."*

*"I have no regrets here, even if I die. My fear towards my elder sisters, the fear for my blood, has been cleared up. It's all thanks to Sagara."*

*"Iehisa. It's still too early for you to die. Didn't you want to fall in love? No matter what result turns out, don't die."*

*"Sagara doesn't know the outcome of this battle?"*

*"Yes. In the history that I know, the Shimazu army did not send any reserve force for Sagara Yoshihi. Well, seen this way, there would be no leeway to take at all."*

*"Is that so? If it's like that, so be it. It's like what Sagara said about the future not being fixed in one place. But I think the future has been partly changed."*

*"Yes. It's like that."*

*"It is all because of the effort that Sagara has done. But after fighting this battle, we could grasp a new future."*

*"But Iehisa. This isn't the place where you are leaving your 'will' and will die. You are still young. It's your side who's supposed to inherit that 'will.' Please don't forget this."*

*"Nyaa. If I lose Sagara here, it will be my greatest regret. I want to spend more time with Sagara. There are still a lot of places in the capital that I haven't visited yet. More than that,*

*there is still something that I haven't conveyed to Sagara. If you die before I tell it, it will be my regret for all my life. I don't want that.* [Death flag, death flag. Death flag everywhere.]

*"An important thing?"*

*"It isn't a bad thing. It's a good thing. After Sagara arrives at Sagara Yoshihi's place and I have successfully defended you, I will rouse my courage and tell you about it. So it's decided. It will be my victory."*

*"I am a child who has been recognized as a full-fledged strategist by my onee-sama,"*  
Iehisa showed her white teeth.

The Shimazu's 200 soldiers who had been lined in a column formation, with resolution for an honorable death, crashed against Kai Soun's detached forces that numbered 1000 and formed a wall.

Even if the person in question, Kai Soun, was absent, their defenses were solid, and the crane wing formation was executed carefully as a close defensive formation. It wasn't something that the Shimazu army could breakthrough so easily.

The differences between the armies were overwhelming.

In favor of using strength on a great number of soldiers, Kai Soun's forces pushed away the Shimazu army that had made a column in order to make a breakthrough on the center; the encirclement was narrowing.

They were outnumbered. The men of Satsuma Hayato fell one after another.

However, from the other side of their comrades' corpses, the swordsmen, one after another, "*Chestoooo*," roared like wild monkeys as they carried out a daring suicidal raid.

Soun's elite soldiers had been used as a wall against the Shimazu army. But the absence of Kai Soun had made change little by little.

The drill had become a long, thin line; with furious speed and insanity that aimed at a single point, the Shimazu army repeated their charge even if their forces were being shaven one after another. Finally, the long crane wing formation couldn't hold on any longer.

A slight opening appeared on the defensive formation of impregnable guards.

*"Iehisa-sama, we're changing the history of the Shimazu Clan, who made Sagara Yoshihi die without help in Hibiki-no-Hara!"*

Niuro Musahsi who had been Iehisa's private tutor took his spears up and was cutting deep into the enemy in order to make a hole. Because of her tactic, the brave men of Shimazu fell down one by one.

Iehisa felt like crying. She wanted to complain. But Yoshihiro and Yoshihiro rode on her sides, silently supporting Iehisa.

It wasn't about her painful suicidal fight against the difference of her blood lineage anymore. In the future, as one of the Shimazu 4 Sisters, and as the tactician of the Shimazu Clan, Shimazu Iehisa would live in dignity without shame.

*In front of those two, I want to prove it.*

*Now is the time for the heroic men of Satsuma Hayato to cut deep within the enemy. I am already alright. I wanted to be recognized!*

*“Musashi! All of the young soldiers! This isn't a fight to cast your life away! This is the fight to save Sagara Yoshihi's life!”*

Iehisa whipped her horse and swung her war fan, her horse then galloping in full speed.

She dove into the frontline, cutting countless enemies with Niuro Musashi next to her.

*“Pierce! Pierce! Pierce the enemies!”*

*“You mustn't let Hime-sama die! If she dies, the pride of Satsuma Hayato's men dies here!”* Niuro Musashi roared as the men of Satsuma Hayato finally broke through at one point.

In the middle of the heavy horizontal formation, a hole had been made.

Kai Soun's detached force that had been a wall against the Shimazu army collapsed.

When the first line was peeled off, a hole being thrust into, the soldiers who were holding in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> lines, *“A bear has appeared in the battlefield,”* became restless.

A herd of black Asian bears [Yes. “Herd” is used to emphasize the bears individually, not collectively], disturbed by the sound of battle, came down from the mountain and began to rampage in Hibiki-no-Hara. A portion of Kai Soun's forces must go to suppress the bears. The wall had become thinner.

*“Fate has finally turned!”* Yoshiharu thought.

The Shimazu army broke through the small opening, and then quickly fled from the stampede.

At the other side of the broken wall, Sagara Yoshihi was seen.

But Kai Soun's main force from the north had already surrounded her main camp.

Kai Soun's main force surrounded Yoshihi's main camp on every direction.

The Shimazu army had just broken through the wall, and there was still some distance to the main camp.

Furthermore, an arquebus army that Kai Soun had hired lined up between the main camp and the Shimazu army to prevent their further advance, which had just penetrated the wall.

*“Nyaa, Kai Soun is faster than us! He’s got time to make a counter! Moreover, that’s a lot of arquebuses!”*

*“I will take the lead! Rout the enemies that are blocking us, make way to Sagara Yoshihi’s main camp!”*

The famous horse—Hisatsuki Kurige—with its large body, rushed forward together with Yoshihiro.

*“With just a horse? Yoshihiro-nee-chan, it’s absurd to use it against Tanegashimas!”*

*“Ah. It’s impossible if I do it alone. Iehisa, bring out the arquebus corps! Launch a barrage from the back and support me!”*

*“Yoshihiro-nee-chan, it’s unreasonable to draw out Tanegashimas behind you! Any mistake will result in Yoshihiro-nee-chan getting shot as well!”*

*“Iehisa. Grandfather’s keen insight was truly right. Possessing talent in military tactics. You are the treasure that the Shimazu family has produced. I believe in you. So, I will leave my back to you.”*

*“Yoshihiro-nee-chan...”*

*“I don’t believe in fate and the future. Everything is the result of humans’ actions and will. Victory or defeat is a chance. There will be no regret if I get shot by a stray bullet and die. Sagara Yoshiharu! I entrust my imouto to you!”*

*“I understand. Go!”*

Yoshihiro rushed forward with her horse against Kai Soun’s forces that were blocking and shooting at her one after another.

*“Shimazu Isshin Yoshihiro has come!”*

*“Shoot! Shoot them!”* Iehisa gave order to the Shimazu gun troops to let out an artillery barrage with Tanegashimas. It’s different from modern day firearms. The accuracy of the Tanegashimas of the Sengoku era was low. In other words, the probability of it missing from its target was high. But Yoshihiro continued to run straight through without looking back. Iehisa had overcome the fear in her heart, which seemed to have stopped beating, and ordered the corps

to shoot simultaneously. The surroundings of Yoshihiro, who kept on running at high speed, became a literal “personification of death” where bullets from foes and allies flew amiss.

*“I’ve never seen such an absurd and heroic sister,”* Yoshiharu became amazed, feeling jealous.

*“Unless it were the Shura among Shuras—Kai Soun—there is no one who can hold the Takegami—Shimazu Yoshihiro—back,”* Yoshiharu was convinced.

But a battle was ever-changing.

*“Nyaa. The direction of the wind has changed. Yoshihiro-neechan!”*

When she and the others readied their Tanegashimas at their horses, the moment the bullets were shot, Iehisa shouted loudly.

For an instant, a gust of wind blew

The wind bent the trajectory of the bullets that Iehisa had shot, directing them to Yoshihiro’s back.

However, as if it were trying to protect Yoshihiro, Hizaori Kurige bent its huge body forward, and the bullet barely missed.

At the same time the bullet missed, Hizaori Kurige raised its head again. *“No time to waste when they are recharging their guns,”* it raised its forefeet and rushed toward the enemies.

Iehisa felt her strength collapse on top of her horse, *“... Haa~. I wet my pants...”*

Yoshihiro threw away her spear with a scratched blade and draw her sword out as she patted her beloved horse.

*“I was saved again by you. You are truly wild, Hizaori Kurige.”*

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Toshihisa, who was watching over Yoshihiro and Iehisa’s charge from the back, noticed something unusual happening in this moment.

*“Their allies’ perturbed actions are awkward,” she whispered quietly to Yoshihisa.*

*“Onee-sama. The movement of Kai Soun’s gun corps is strange. Somehow, not all of them are focusing on the Shimazu army. If I judge it from their war banners, more than half of gun corps still remain at the back of the leading banner under Kai Soun’s, who is rushing to Yoshihi’s main camp from the north, direct command.”*

*“What do you mean, Toshihisa-chan?”*

*“I don’t know. It’s like they’re cutting off a path of retreat for their own leader Kai Soun...”*

*“Toshihisa-chan. Yoshihiro-chan is opening up a path one after another like a fierce demon, but Kai Soun’s advancement speed is abnormal. They’ve arrived earlier. We are not on time.”*

*“Yes. It will be bad if someone has arrived earlier than us. That’s why I have prepared a measure for the worst scenario.”*

*“Measure for the worst scenario?”*

*“Given the position of the two armies, it’s possible that Sagara Yoshiharu won’t arrive at the main camp on time. Therefore, I’ve already taken one move ahead. By making a perfect opening on Kai Soun’s awareness, I have sent another rescuer to Sagara Yoshihi’s main camp”*

*“Eh? Eh? Who?”*

*“However, if my expectations are met... She and Yoshihi might get killed.”*

Toshihisa’s unease was proven right. [Fuck this.]

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At the uninhabited main camp, Sagara Yoshihi sat down, waiting for her fate without drawing her sword at all.

Would Kai Soun come to kill her because she had broken their vow?

Or would Sagara Yoshiharu break through Kai Soun’s solid defense and come running to change Yoshihi’s fate?

Yoshihi didn’t want Yoshiharu to disappear.

Therefore, the former... Even though she was waiting for Kai Soun, but at the bottom of her heart, she was imagining a future where Yoshiharu would come crying in to the camp; it was an amusing thing.

And the answer from reality was much cruel to Yoshihi.

As for that reality, the Kyushu of the Sengoku era wasn't a world of fairy tale.

Wrapped in a black Namban overcoat smeared with blood. A man of huge build. Kai Soun had appeared in front of Yoshihi.

Sagara Yoshiharu hadn't come in time.

Yoshihi thought that this was alright.

*"Your willpower is gone, Yoshihi. I've come over for that day's promise."*

It's not possible to read Kai Soun's feelings behind his eyes that were covered by black sunglasses.

*"It's alright, Uncle Soun. I've come here to be defeated by uncle."*

Yoshihi thrust her fingers in front of Soun and bowed without standing up.

*"You should've been defeated at Kizakihara and surrendered to the Shimazu Clan, and are supposed to be married to Sagara Yoshiharu. But, Sagara Yoshiharu will disappear if you marry him. It's because you are clearly Sagara Yoshiharu's direct ancestor. I heard it from the lispng ninja. Did you come here to die because of Sagara Yoshiharu?"* [Wow. These people's information networks are amazing.]

*"... Yes. It's one of the reasons why I decided to break the promise I made with Uncle Soun off. If Yoshiharu and my life are in a balance, the other one should choose Yoshiharu's life. I finally found that, the meaning of why I was born. If I die here, Yoshiharu will be able to live. I don't want to bring his will that has been running on with all of his effort to nothing."*

*"That ninja doesn't seem to want you to die."*

*"It's a meddlesome habit just like her master. I wanted to be of use for Yoshiharu. There is no regret. And so, I will part away from uncle here.... Thank you for always, always protecting us two sisters, Uncle Soun."*

*"Is Sagara Yoshiharu a man you can entrust Tokuchiyo to?"*

*"Yes, that is so."*

*"When you die, the direct connection of blood between you and Yoshiharu will be cut. I heard that Tokuchiyo would become the direct ancestor of Yoshiharu instead. In that way,*

*history will balance itself. You will lose your life for Yoshiharu, and even your blood connection to him. Will that be fine for you?"*

*"... Fufu. Though she can't speak clearly, she is talkative. Blood connection is not a problem. I was a total stranger, but uncle has loved me like your own daughter. The density of one's blood is unrelated to whether you are a family or not."*

*"It is so. Similarly, whether you are the legitimate or illegitimate child. It is all unrelated to you sisters of the Sagara Clan."*

*"... Yes. I was able to finally understand it. It was painful throughout. I've held a secret that I didn't reveal to uncle all this time. But now, I will say it. I will die now, for I have found a person who can protect Tokuchiyo. This is what the Christian people call as 'confessing.' I hope that you will cut my neck once I finish."*

*"I'm not a padre, but a monk," Soun said curtly.*

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*"I am... not... 'Sagara Yoshihi...' I am a fake."*

Yoshihi confessed.

She intended to die in silence without telling anyone.

*But I can't endure it anymore, and I want to reveal it when I face Kai Soun.*

*Because I believe that if it's Uncle Soun, he wouldn't leak the truth to other people.*

*"Tokuchiyo and I were coincidentally born on the same day. One is the lawful wife's child, and the other is the concubine's child. But the daughter of the concubine was born just slightly earlier. I am the concubine's daughter. I am an illegitimate child who originally had no right to succeed the family estate. Tokuchiyo is the lawful wife's child. That child is the legitimate daughter of the Sagara family. The name 'Yoshihi' that the Ashikaga family has been given to inherit the shogunate is actually the name of that child."*

*"Grandfather was concerned of the complicated birth of these sisters," Yoshihi tried to tell it to Soun with a smile. But she wasn't able to laugh. Her vision was blurred by tears. The gigantic figure of Kai Soun who was looking down upon her, that image was like the figure of Nio.*

*“To prevent the internal disturbance of the whole family that has been the curse of the Sagara family, and to leave ‘the blood of the Sagara origin’ to prosperity; once we sisters were born, grandfather immediately took a measure. I was replaced by Tokuchiyo. I, as the eldest sister, am treated as the legitimate child that the lawful wife has given birth to, while the younger sister Tokuchiyo is treated as the illegitimate child. Tokuchiyo was banished from Hitoyoshi Castle and was put at a temple in Yatsushiro Mountain... We sisters were born and separated immediately... As one can remember, Tokuchiyo had always disagreed on living in the temple, and she became a wild child that lived alone in the mountain.”*

*“While I was attended by the retainers at Hitoyoshi Castle without knowing anything at all, Tokuchiyo wandered around the mountain accompanied by a bear; she is a pitiful child,” Yoshihi covered her face with her fingers and continued talking. Her tears wouldn’t stop even when her eyelids were covered by her fingers.*

*“What do you mean by leaving ‘the blood of the Sagara origin’ to prosperity?”*

*“My wise grandfather judged that the Sengoku era would end in several decades in the future. By the fact that Tanegashima were introduced to Japan, war would change. The era of fierce wars of firearms would arrive, and a hopeful fin de siècle will come. The Sagara Clan which is surrounded by great powers will not be able to continue being a daimyo of the Sengoku era. There are only two choices: to be destroyed by a conqueror or become their subordinate.”*

*“Therefore, the legitimate child Tokuchiyo was falsified as the illegitimate child and sent to the temple?”*

*“It is so. Even if the Sagara Clan, as a daimyo of the Sengoku era, becomes extinct; as long as Tokuchiyo survives, then the pure blood of the Sagara family can be left to the future generation. I, the illegitimate child, succeeded the Sagara family in disguise instead of the legitimate child. I will live for the continuation of the Sagara family name. If the family name miraculously survives, then it’s all good. Even if I am defeated in war and executed, as long as Tokuchiyo is unhurt, then the bloodline of the family head won’t go extinct. My grandfather chose blood rather than the Sagara Clan’s name.”*

*“It would not be a problem if the illegitimate child is executed?”*

*“... Soon after receiving the birthright, the truth was revealed by grandfather; I despaired when I was considered as a bird in a cage to be sacrificed for the sake of the Sagara family. Without knowing anything, Tokuchiyo who was sent to Yatsushiro was pitiful. I wanted to bring her back to Hitoyoshi Castle and give the birthright to Tokuchiyo immediately. Grandfather asked me this, “Then Tokuchiyo will be killed. You still don’t mind?” I immediately chose to protect Tokuchiyo without hesitation. In truth, when grandfather passed away, a person from uncle’s clan revolted. They would’ve deceived Tokuchiyo if grandfather didn’t send her out*

*of our house. Tokuchiyo and I would have to kill each other, and that is how it would've turned out."*

*"Without husband nor child, I could make the Sagara Clan survive. That's because the Sagara Clan will be transferred to the direct descendant of Tokuchiyo right away. Because I must not let the truth be unveiled, I continued to pretend that I had prejudice against Tokuchiyo and hated her. The clan would revolt should the truth be revealed. If there is a revolt, Tokuchiyo and I would have to fight," Yoshihi cried.*

*"It's my cursed fate that doesn't allow me to live my life for my own sake. It's a sorrowful thing that I can't embrace and sooth Tokuchiyo with gentle. I feel sorry for Tokuchiyo who was thrown out to the mountains knowing nothing. Therefore, when the whole clan rebelled against me and I escaped from Hitoyoshi Castle, I shouldn't die, no matter what. I couldn't leave Tokuchiyo and die. I couldn't give up. That's why I begged for my life from Uncle Soun..."*

*"However, you said that you had found the meaning of your life. But isn't it only misfortune for a fake Sagara Yoshihi like you to live in misery and suffering?"*

*"Sagara Yoshiharu told me. Because he was captivated by Oda Nobuna that he decided to stay in this Sengoku era than to pass through Amano-Iwato. I understand that significant way of life, because I am tied to an existence called 'Tokuchiyo,' who is my younger sister, too. If I die here, Sagara Yoshiharu would survive. Tokuchiyo could regain Hitoyoshi Castle and finally become the real 'Sagara Yoshihi.' If Sagara Yoshiharu looks after her, then the Sagara Clan and Tokuchiyo will surely be alright. I can entrust Tokuchiyo to him in peace. Furthermore, Yoshiharu and Tokuchiyo are directly connected by blood. All is settled peacefully. To the place where it should be. Therefore, it's my fate, to disappear here."*

*"Do you love Tokuchiyo?"*

*"I love her. With the difference in lineage, I, who am a substitute by obligation, couldn't honestly touch Tokuchiyo. But it's different now. It's already too late..."*

*"Have you fallen in love with Sagara Yoshiharu?"*

*"Yes, it's probably, like that. When I learnt that I absolutely couldn't marry him, I felt dread over my fate, for a little. If there were a god in the heavens, I thought that I wanted him to grant my dream, for at least once. My confession ends here..."*

*"Uncle. The outskirts of the main camp have become noisy. I want to accomplish my fate before Sagara Yoshiharu arrives here. He certainly will come here despite innumerable difficulties. To rescue me. For that reason, he will seriously do that even if he is about to disappear. Before that happens, please bring everything to an end," Yoshihi deeply bowed her head, showing her white nape.*

*"Cut it, please cut it," it was murmured with a whisper and shivers.*

Kai Soun nodded, *"I understand."*

*"However, there is one secret that I have been hiding from you."*

*"... That is?"*

*"I was informed by your grandfather that he had substituted Tokuchiyo with you. Just in case that you die young for not being able to escape from an urgent problem without sacrifice, then Tokuchiyo would be the next heiress. And if you couldn't endure living like a bird in a cage, your grandfather would allow your emancipation to the outside world. He chose me, from a neighboring country, as the guardian for that purpose. After all, there is no credibility in the Sagara Clan. I also added some things into the written oath: "If Sagara Yoshihi dies without leaving a child, or if she decides to abandon her birthright on her volition; then Tokuchiyo would be the next heiress, and Kai Soun should continuously protect Tokuchiyo."*

*"It's a lie. Uncle should've sunk the written oath into the pond. So the evidence is..."*

*"It was a lie that I had sunk it."*

Kai Soun took the written oath out that should've sunk from his breast pocket, and subsequently opened it.

*"... Why... Why? Why is it not thrown away? I should've broken the oath with uncle. Why?"*

*"I don't intend to comply with a selfish old man. When I was about to put an end to the Sagara Clan's internal revolt, I was going to precisely cut Tokuchiyo. I thought that if Tokuchiyo were killed, you would be able to live your own life for the first time. But you refused that. Even though you have suffered so much in living as a scapegoat, you were going to stupidly continue protecting your younger sister. The noble thing that I have lost after killing my three sons, I found in you. And you were right."*

*I don't intend to make you wait for a long time, I will die soon too.*

*Go to Yomi earlier, Sagara Yoshihi.*

*"I have decided that I won't kill a woman. If I can, I wanted to emancipate you to a world outside the Sagara Clan. But the rebel who defied my master and the person who broke the written oath are different. If I can't kill you here, then the death of the three sons whom I purged as rebels will have no meaning. Forgive me."*

*"I am not allowed to forgive anything. After all, my life originally was given by you, Uncle. Fare thee well, uncle."*

Soun became silent. He raised his sword cane slowly over Yoshihi's head.

And at the speed of lightning, the sword cane swung down.

But Yoshihi's neck hadn't fallen.

*"I won't let you do that to my aneue!"*

The intruder who fell from the sky held a bamboo spear, standing before Kai Soun and blocking his sword cane.

It was a tanned girl wearing a handmade armor from bear skin.

The bright, cheerful, and pure "hime" whose real name should be "Sagara Yoshihi."

It was the younger sister who yearned and loved "Yoshihi" the whole time.

*"... Tokuchiyo, you, why are you here?"*

*"Hibiki-no-Hara is a small marshland surrounded by a mountain at every direction! I made a surprise attack with Inuwarashi and the bears from the top of the mountain! Taking the chance when the Shimazu army and Soun armies fought each other intensively! For the detail, please ask Shimazu Toshihisa!"*

*"But why hadn't you been found yet until you came here?"*

*"It's possible to hide behind Inuwarashi's back with a bear skin! It's the wisdom of survival in the mountains, Aneue! It should be called a camouflage!"*

*"I am caught off guard? Shimazu Toshihisa..."* Kai Soun threw away his sword cane, murmuring.

*"Please wait, uncle! Please don't involve Tokuchiyo in this!"*

*"That is not possible, this girl has interrupted it."*

*"Tokuchiyo, go back! You fool! You are entirely unrelated to us!"*

*"I refuse, Aneue! I will not return!"*

*"You refuse to turn back?!"*

*"A duel, Kai Soun! I've continued on sincerely mastering the Taisha-Ryu style swordsmanship in order to protect my sister!"* [Let's just interpret it that her *sojutsu* is a bastardization of a kind of *kenjutsu*]

Tokuchiyo brandished the secret art of Taisha-Ryu style... However, Soun stopped the bamboo spear that Tokuchiyo had thrown with his elbow that was covered with iron plate. He

sandwiched it between his elbows and knees, and instantly broke it. At the same time, he kicked Tokuchiyo's solar plexus, and she fell into Yoshihi's arms.

*"It is a good skill. But it isn't possible for any school art of swordsmanship to break my self-taught unorthodox style. I know your sword style. But you don't know mine. Victory and defeat through the use of a real sword are decided by the style of your enemy, tactics, and whether you know techniques."*

*My art isn't the kenjutsu of samurais.*

*It's much closer to the art of a ninja.*

*It's specialized only on killing the enemy.*

Kai Soun took Tokuchiyo's combat strength away with a blow.

Yoshihi hugged Tokuchiyo's body which couldn't stand up anymore.

*At last, I am able to hold Tokuchiyo, but again...*

*"... Uuu. It was useless... He's too strong... I'm sorry, Aneue..."*

*"Don't talk! I will beg for your life, so don't say any unnecessary things anymore!"*

*"No. I won't be silent! Although I can't fight any longer, but my mouth can still talk! Kai Soun! I have the entire responsibility of the crime that Aneue betrayed you! Because I am the real Sagara Clan's 18<sup>th</sup> heiress, Sagara Yoshihi!"*

Yoshihi was appalled, lost for words.

*"I'm sorry, I have heard it,"* Tokuchiyo made a wry smile.

*"Tokuchiyo. Did you listen to my words?"*

*"Because you didn't want to be involved in the Shuras' wars in Kyushu, you wanted to conceal it all this time. Because I am not smart, I wasn't able to notice it. I'm sorry, Aneue."*

*"Tokuchiyo. I who am an illegitimate child banished you who are the legitimate child from Hitoyoshi Castle. Haven't you born grudge against me who keep pretending to be the head of the Sagara Clan?"*

*"Aneue abandoned her own life in order to become my scapegoat. The gentle Aneue who inherited the Sagara family to keep me alive. I can't bear a grudge. Because everyday was happy for me. It's much painful for Aneue, wasn't it? I'm sorry."*

*"... It's different. You were deceived by grandfather and me."*

*“It was such a good play, wasn’t it? I wanted to take up a spear and become a princess general, wanting to protect my elder sister; but I couldn’t win against Kai Soun. There is only death for a Shura who has been defeated. Therefore, this is the last chance for us to talk and embrace each other as sisters.”*

*“... After all, I wasn’t able to protect you, at all...”*

Yoshihi hugged Tokuchiyo’s warm body.

*I have obtained the thing which I thought I couldn’t get for eternity.*

*Even if it’s just for a little while.*

*“Aneue. There will be no more obstacles...”*

*“That’s right. I leave it you, uncle. If you choose one, then kill me. If you want to kill us both, then please pierce my body and Tokuchiyo’s with one spear. So that, after death, we sisters won’t be separated.”*

The scene of the night where Kai Soun followed his master’s order to kill his three sons who had plotted a rebellion against his master: it was reflected on the figure of these two sisters who embraced each other, prepared for death.

*“... There are four sons of mine who communicated secretly with the Ito Clan, planning a rebellion. The eldest brother protected the 3 younger brothers, when all of the responsibilities lied in the eldest brother.”*

Soun killed the three younger brothers.

But only the eldest brother that he couldn’t kill.

At first, all of them would be executed.

But only the eldest brother was kept alive.

*“Father. If you do not kill me here. I will kill father eventually,”* the eldest brother gave such a warning. Kai Soun then reported to his lord, *“The eldest brother didn’t assist in the rebellion,”* and saved his life.

Soun himself didn’t know why he had done that.

*To daringly let one person live on, I might want to let my son who survived kill me. Now, can these two Sagara sisters be both killed?*

Looking down at the trembling sisters who were embracing each other, for the first time that this 40-year old Shura felt so perplexed, unable to control himself.

*Go away, never appear in front of me, ever again,* Soun couldn't suppress the impulse to shout it.

*But I would betray master's order if I overlook the Sagara sisters. Then the death of my 3 sons whom I killed by master's order would become meaningless. Then, what meaning is there in killing these two sisters who were separated immediately at birth, who are embracing each other and mutually devoted to each other the entire time? For the Aso Clan. For the man called Kai Soun.*

Soun's hesitation would definitely force the Sagara sisters into a corner.

A gust of wind blew, the heavy smell of smoke powder drifted throughout the camp.

*"Yoshihi, Tokuchiyo. It was my mistake that you two gathered here. When I hesitated and failed to take Yoshihi's neck... It is viewed that there is a rebellious heart inside me, a grudge for having to kill my sons by the master's order."*

*"Uncle."*

*"This smell is surely..."*

*"Time is up. My lord has set a trap up..."*

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The thunderous roars of bears that were rampaging in the grasslands resounded throughout Hibiki-no-Hara.

At this time, the Shimazu army that were running to the south side of the main camp had found a way out with Yoshihiro on the lead.

Yoshiharu was approaching Yoshihi's main camp little by little.

Jumping off from his horse, Yoshiharu tore the camp curtain, tumbling upon just the front of Yoshihi.

Yoshihi's main camp bathed in the salvo of the Aso Clan's gun corps positioned on the north.

*"Wha... Whaaaaaaat?!"*

Out of guilt and fear for having ordered Kai Soun to kill his family, the Aso Clan bore suspicion on Soun's betrayal. *"When Soun hesitates, shoot Yoshihi's main camp!"*

*“Toshihisa used our Shimazu army’s charge to make up for a smokescreen, leading Tokuchiyo to the main camp! How unfavorable, the second alternative plan has backfired!”*

*“If both the Sagara sisters get shot, Sagara-san will be hurt! Go stop them!”*

Yoshihiro and Iehisa who had received Toshihisa’s messenger shouted and led the soldiers towards the Aso Clan’s gun corps. They were all scattered around, but at that time, the enemies had finished shooting Yoshihi’s main camp. The shooting stopped. When Yoshiharu let out a courageous shout that reached Yoshihi, a lot of bullets had already gone through Yoshihi’s and Tokuchiyo’s bodies... Or that was how it was supposed to be.

But Yoshihi and Tokuchiyo who were embracing each other, protected by Soun’s back, were still alive.

The two people were unharmed.

*“Yoshiharu. I know you will come.”*

*“Eh? Why are Aneue and I still alive?”*

*“Tokuchiyo, because of Uncle Soun, the two of us...”*

The two sisters’ small bodies were covered by Soun’s gigantic body, his black Namban coat spread.

*“Soun, you. You protected those two and received all the bullets on your back.”*

*“Sagara Yoshiharu. I am an assassin. This overcoat is made from iron wire. Besides, I covered all of my body with Namban armor. To shield these two small girls.”*

*“But, even if you are armored, just how many bullets have you received in your body?! You intend to stall them for Yoshihi and Tokuchiyo’s sake!”* [Isn’t dat fuqing obvious?!]

*“I have eaten 10 bullets, but it’s not a problem. The bullet did not hit the vital areas. Kid. Though it may seem bad for you who feel a sense of aesthetics towards a man’s death, but I won’t die yet at just this degree. Isn’t it said that a man should die for the sake of women? You intend to exchange your death for others, how naive. Like a kid who got drunk. In case you have found all of the truth, you must pick one’s life. When I stalled those bullets here, and breathed my dying breath, it might be a beautiful story. Maybe an impressive tale about the end of a man’s life, the man called Kai Soun. However, I’ve left one piece of wound in the hearts of Yoshihi and Tokuchiyo. Leaving that aside, I’ve lived, and died ignominiously, as a Shura who killed his sons. I choose to die without any regret, from anyone, and any impressive tale.”*

*“There is one other man here. One man whom I should aim to become,” Yoshiharu thought. “Rather than dying beautifully and leaving sentiments to other people’s minds, he chose*

*to live ignominiously and die a dog's death... For me, such a severe way of living, to have such a lonely, and painful death?" Yoshiharu trembled.*

*"... You are unbelievable. My life is sweet compared to yours. I was afraid of being forgotten from people's memories all this time."*

*"It's natural. It's because you are a kid who doesn't know a woman yet. That will be fine for now."*

*"Uncle. From your feet. Blood is..."*

*"Don't worry. I still have enough energy to ride a horse."*

*"I will return to the Aso Clan," Soun said so as he staggered.*

A great deal of blood loss was going to make his consciousness grow distant.

Still, Soun did not fall.

*"It's useless, uncle! You have already been shot! I'm afraid that if you come back for revenge, you would be executed as a criminal in the Aso Clan!"*

*"... I don't intend to end my life as a meaningless thing. I made that distinction when I killed my three sons. In one's own way."*

Yoshiharu tried to tell Soun about his future.

*"Killing your three sons means that there is still one person you didn't kill, right? You should have 4 people as your sons! If you return to the Aso Clan, your loyalty will be doubted by your master again! In your master's residence, who tried to kill you who did very much for the Aso Clan, you don't need to swear loyalty anymore. You don't need to come back to the Aso Clan. If you are going back beyond that..."*

*"Kid. Don't say anything for what is ahead. I will decide my own destiny."*

Soun mounted a horse, blowing out a rough breath.

*"He is still alive even with so much injury, furthermore conscious," Yoshiharu couldn't believe it.*

Hugging Tokuchiyo who couldn't get up yet after receiving Soun's attack, Yoshihi looked at Soun who was on horseback.

*"Uncle Soun. You've protected my life, and moreover even rescued Tokuchiyo. I don't know how to say my gratitude to uncle."*

*“... I don’t need any gratitude. I only accomplished your grandfather’s request. To begin with, my master will shot this main camp unless I kill you two sisters. I am a retainer of the Aso Clan. And you who are a person of the Sagara Clan already belong to the Shimazu Clan. From now on, we are enemies.”*

*“Now, we, won’t we be able to meet?”*

*“I won’t die so easily. Until the moment I die, I will continue living. I don’t think about my death until the end. If you live, there is a chance for us to meet again. Live on, Yoshihi. Look for the meaning of why you were born. There is no meaning in death, but there is in living.”*

*“... Yes”*

*“Sagara Yoshiharu. I leave Yoshihi and Tokuchiyo to you.”*

*“Yes.”*

*“If it’s you. I can trust you. Farewell.”*

Yoshihiro and Iehisa came running to the main camp after making the Aso army retreat at the end of the fierce battle. The two people were astonished that Yoshihi and Tokuchiyo were unharmed and still alive. *“Kai Soun defended these two people,”* they immediately understood.

Soun was badly injured to such degree.

*“What is happening in the Aso Clan now. Trying to suspect Kai Soun’s betrayal in the middle of a fight, I can’t think of it to be something a samurai should do!”*

*“Nyaa. These three people are still alive. Sagara hasn’t disappeared. That’s great!”*

*“... Greenhorn. How dull...”*

In response to Soun’s words, Yoshihiro raised her eyebrows.

*“What? The soldiers that you lead are being pushed by the Shimazu army and still continuing their retreat. This round is 80% Shimazu’s victory, and you still call us greenhorn?”*

The strongest, undefeated Shura of Kyushu.

The Takegami and Satsuma’s Oni of Shimazu.

Enemies by fate.

When they met, they couldn’t help but emit fighting spirit from their whole body against each other.

*“Nyaa, nyaa. We have finally, narrowly rescued Yoshihi. If these two people fight each other, it will be a serious matter! Please stop, stop it!”* Iehisa rushed and clung to Yoshiharu.

However, *“It’s alright,”* Yoshiharu patted Iehisa’s head.

Soun shrugged Yoshihiro’s fighting spirit off, as what Yoshiharu had expected.

*“It’s me who’ve reached Yoshihi first. You were one step behind. I did not lose. I simply handed over the victory to you, lass.”*

*“Muu...”*

*“However, Shimazu Yoshihiro, I want to fight you. I haven’t seen any Shura who could release such fighting spirit like you. Indeed, you are worthy of the title ‘Takegami.’ Whether I die or you will fall down, it will all be decided in one blow.”*

*“Taisha-Ryu style has been seen through!”* Tokuchiyo who as lifted by Yoshihi screamed unconsciously.

*“My swordsmanship isn’t only Taisha-Ryu. When facing such a real monster, I still have trump cards,”* Yoshihiro smiled with apparent sincerity.

*“However, Kai Soun. It’s ridiculous if someone tries to duel me with the same state of a dead person. Even if I defeat you, it won’t do honor to my bravery. Try again after you’ve treat your injury.”*

*“... I must give my gratitude to the Shimazu Clan who have sent a desperate reserve army to rescue Yoshihi. I will overlook your life today.”*

*“Leave be. It’s our word, Kai Soun.”*

*“It’s easy to drop your neck here, but I will bring this competition to an end now. I must come back to the Aso Clan and settle our issues. You go to Hyuga quickly and deal with the Otomo Clan.”*

Soun ran with his horse and passed through Yoshihiro who had become his archenemy, competing over the title of the strongest Shura of Kyushu.

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After Kasi Soun had withdrawn from the battlefield, the Shimazu 4 Sisters along, with Yoshiharu and the Sagara sisters, immediately held a war council at the main camp in Hibiki-no-Hara.

*“Iyaa. That put me in cold sweat. Your nee-chan thought Yoshihi and Tokuchiyo were dead, I was impatient. It’s as if I were a villain who sent these two people to the jaws of death, putting them together and getting rid of them. Is that alright as the prologue of ‘The Legend of Shimazu Yoshihisa’s Villainy’ in its own right? The enemy of the legend is Kai Soun who protected the Sagara sisters. With Kai Soun’s lolicon spirit becoming a legend in the future, my legend of terror will spread throughout Kyushu!”*

*“Anesha. Never mind about the joke, I want you to start the topic of our discussion immediately. Our situation is very critical.”*

*“Yoshihisa-nee. The Otomo Clan’s army has already swept the northern part of Hyuga that the Ito Clan abandoned over. Furthermore, they are going to surround Takajo Castle that the Shimazu Clan has just occupied. We were able to make peace with Kai Soun, but our friction with the Aso Clan will not dissolve easily. We, too, should hurry to Hyuga.”*

*“But, Toshihisa. Even if we fight the Otomo Clan, the fight will be totally different from the usual, indecisive Otomo Sorin. That Namban strategist is a formidable adversary. Whether he is a person who thoroughly understands Japan’s martial law or tactics, or he is a person that we must thoroughly eliminate or someone whom we can compromise with, it’s necessary to know these before entering the battle.”*

*“That’s right, Yoshihiro-nee. Usually, the size of influence the ruler has and their attitude, for better or worse, is different for the Otomo army. Let’s send a messenger.”*

*“Under the pretext of being a messenger, we will investigate Gaspard, Toshihisa.”*

*“Yes, it’s like that. In a great war, if we don’t know the enemy, it’s a dangerous thing.”*

*“Sagara. Please go to the Otomo Clan as a messenger from the Oda Clan. You are also going as the representative of the Shimazu Clan together!”*

Iehisa also proposed, *“It has taken a long time, but a chance to carry out the order from Nobuna has finally come. I understand, I will go as well,”* Yoshiharu nodded.

*“Iehisa? Isn’t it where I should go instead?”* Toshihisa wondered, but, *“Nyaa. I will go. I am already a full-fledged adult,”* Iehisa paid no ear.

*“It’s alright, Toshihisa. Because I am going to be accompanied by Kuroda Kanbei and Frois-chan to mediate the concord between the Otomo and Shimazu armies, there shouldn’t be any worry that Iehisa might get assassinated.”*

*“Konoe-sama as well. I’m a bit upset that it hasn’t been decided who among the Shimazu family will become Sagara’s wife; it should be done in haste.”*

*“If I meet Gaspard, there is a great risk that I might get erased behind. It’s the same thing that happens wherever I go.”*

And an unexpected voice rang out.

*“I’m worried about Yoshiharu’s condition which is like fireflies entering the fire. And so, I will accompany Yoshiharu as his onee-sama. My situation is [being] a former ally of the Otomo Clan and the allied army, something like a bridge connecting to the Shimazu Clan. I am also an old acquaintance of Sorin.”*

Sagara Yoshihi volunteered herself as an envoy.

*“I’m thankful for that, but why not as imouto?”*

*“It’s onee-sama. I am your ancestor. How could I be an imouto?”*

Tokuchiyo pulled Yoshihi’s sleeve out, biting her Akumaki down.

*“Aneue. The Sagara Clan and bear-chan [Mind you?] have just recently become subordinates of the Shimazu Clan. If we come back together to Hitoyoshi Castle, won’t the vassals be shaken?”*

Inuwarashi that stood next to Tokuchiyo as it ate a pet food cried, *“Gauu.”* It seemed to be nodding.

*“Tokuchiyo. I will transfer the seat of the Sagara Clan’s head to you. As for me, I will be doing things with Sagara Yoshiharu from now on. It is pitiful that there isn’t a blood-related family nor a retainer for this man from the future. In addition, even though there are a strategist and a strong general, there isn’t a deputy general inside Yoshiharu’s army. So I, who am an excellent princess general, will become his ‘onee-sama’ from now on, intending to support the Sagara family of the Oda Clan from the shadow as his deputy general.”* [Aaaaand an official harem member has really appeared.]

*“Nyaa nyaa,”* Iehisa raised a cry of kitten and stood up to charge between Yoshiharu and Yoshihi; to separate those two. But, *“Now, now,”* she was restrained by both Yoshihisa and Toshihisa.

*“Aaah. Such thing. To be an elder sister? \*Cough\*, \*cough\*.”*

*“I want to spend time with you a little more. My life has been saved by Uncle Soun twice. I want to live without any regret.”*

Yoshiharu and the Shimazu Three Sisters were already informed that Yoshihi was actually the illegitimate child of the Sagara Clan and that Tokuchiyo was the legitimate child. Yoshihi consulted the matter about transferring her birthright to Tokuchiyo, and it was accepted.

*“What is this? You will become a dummy general for my imouto, you intend to give your life up again, and, furthermore, you want to throw it away for me?”* Yoshiharu was surprised, but he accepted Yoshihi’s proposal.

However, the talk about joining his corps as his ‘onee-sama’ was a surprise to Yoshiharu as well.

As for Yoshihi, who was devoted and carried a fierce dedication for her younger sister’s life, there was no one else that Yoshiharu could qualify as his ‘deputy general.’ In Yoshiharu’s army, although there are 2 great genius strategists—Hanbei and Kanbei—as well as the brave general, Yamanaka Shikanosuke, there wasn’t any commander from his family who could act as the general for Yoshiharu during Yoshiharu’s absence. Shikanosuke had the capacity to be a commander, but she was not a kin of Yoshiharu. Because she had the fame of being an outsider and background as the hero of the Amago Clan. Even if she were the symbol of “martial arts” of the main force of Sagara Corps, it was still hard to consider her as the ‘deputy general’ who managed the Sagara Corps during Yoshiharu’s absence. *“For I who am a country bumpkin from Izumo to become the deputy general of the Sagara Clan? That’s impossible! Oh? My lord knows that this is impossible and is forcing the Seven Sufferings and Eight Pains to this Shikanosuke,”* the person in question was being modest and held back. [I wonder how Nobuna will react to this?]

Nene was the one who formed the Sagara Kindergarten Army, but his younger sisters almost had no fighting experience yet. It would take some time for his younger sisters to grow.

However, if Yoshihi, who had fought as a daimyo in the Kyushu of Shuras, joined Sagara’s family as the deputy general; then the handicap of Yoshiharu’s corps would be greatly removed, and Yoshiharu would be able to work three times more.

But above all else, *“I want to start a new life with you. Please accept me,”* when Yoshihi smiled like so, he couldn’t decline.

*“Hey, I am also like a younger sister to Sagara!”* There was one princess general who let such a cry out, but to Yoshihiro, who was shocked, *“Am I being deserted? Am I not qualified as your nee-san, Iehisa,”* was crying, unable to say anything anymore.

*“Tokuchiyo, you have learnt my secret. You are loved by the people and vassal corps of our territory, and there is Sagara Yoshiharu who is a senior statesman of the Oda Clan as the guardian of the current Sagara Clan. All members of the Shimazu family will not receive you harshly. The illegitimate child has become the legitimate child. The time that position is restored has come.”*

*“Aneue... That’s right. My aneue has finally found the reason of her life! Aneue wanted to go out of Higo and see the world outside Kyushu. I will protect the Sagara Clan in Kyushu so that aneue could return to Hitoyoshi Castle anytime.”*

*“Yes. The name ‘Yoshih’ will also be transferred to you. It was originally the name from the Ashikaga Clan for you.”*

*“N-No, this kind of thing. Being a Yoshihi, I don’t understand the meaning of it.”*

*“Well, what do you know. There are two monkeys and a beautiful woman who share the same name of ‘Sagara Yoshiharu’ now; it has become incomprehensible. Yoshiharu. Think of a suitable name for me. Right now. Don’t give me a name like I’m a useless newcomer. Give me a name that is familiar to the Oda Clan.” Yoshihi let out a laugh, “Fufu,” from her nose and ordered her younger brother.*

*“You are right. Then I shall take the character ‘Ryo/良’ from Sagara Yoshiharu and ‘Na/奈’ from Oda Nobuna, then take them together to ‘Hidenaga/秀長.’ That is how it is!”*

*“Haa? Are you an idiot? Those two characters don’t match together as one!”*

*“Areee? That’s funny. The name of Hideyoshi-jūsan’s younger brother should’ve been Hidenaga. At last, I have found a deputy general suitable for the Sagara Corps, but the name doesn’t match well...”*

*“Even though you are a man from the future, how could you not use Japan’s language skillfully? You are pathetic. If you don’t have me, you are screwed.”*

*“... An onee-chan is troublesome... An imouto is more comfortable.”*

*“What did you say?”*

*“I like elder sister’s name, it’s absolutely not good if aneue’s name is not Yoshihi! No good! No good!” Tokuchiyo frantically made a fuss, “Do not mistakenly read it as ‘Yoshiharu [ヨシハル],’ it will make a mess! Because there are also other people who read it as ‘Yoshihi [ヨシヒ].’ You should introduce yourself as ‘Yoshihi’ as well as ‘Yoshiharu,’ aneue,” and insisted so obstinately.*

*“Muu. It’s much better than being called by a name which isn’t cute like ‘Hidenaga.’ Alright, I will go with that,” Yoshihi nodded.*

*‘Sagara Yoshihi’ retired from her seat as the head of the Sagara Clan, changed her name from ‘Yoshiharu’ to ‘Yoshihi,’ and became the deputy general of Yoshiharu’s army. [This language is interesting as weed]*

After being placed under the guardianship of Yoshiharu and the Shimazu Clan, Tokuchiyo took the position of the 19<sup>th</sup> head of Higo's Sagara Clan. She took the name 'Sagara Yorisada' [another historical name of one of the Sagara Clan's daimyos]. But the vassal corps and people from Kuma still affectionately called this new head of the clan who had returned in triumph from Yatsushiro Mountain to Hitoyoshi Castle as 'Tokuchiyo,' and would still be called like that.

It was supposed to be a difficult work, but Toshihisa had finished writing the written oath. The Shimazu family, Yoshihi, and Tokuchiyo immediately exchanged the written oath about the Sagara Clan's birthright cession formally.

*"Yoshiharu-kun! I wish to see aneue sometime."*

*"Yes. Although Nobuna likes to make people work hard, but I will make her let Yoshihi return home occasionally. Please be relieved!"* [You're just Nobuna's slave, Yoshiharu. Don't expect anything, especially for another rival]

*"Thank you!"*

*"Now, the unrest of the Sagara Clan has been settled orderly,"* Yoshihisa opened her fan.

*"Because Tokuchiyo's intention is more honest than Yoshihi, it is easier to trust her. This is the correct solution for the Shimazu Clan. We were able to sell favor to the Oda Clan since we have helped Yoshiharu's ancestor,"* Toshihisa nodded.

*"This woman slipped away as Sagara Yoshiharu's elder sister. She completely has no credibility at all. S-Surely she intends to coax Sagara Yoshiharu by using her position as his elder sister? A s-s-sister and y-y-younger brother s-s-sleeping together is normal. O-o-on the contrary, b-b-bathing together is,"* Yoshihiro, who got her knowledge about a younger brother distorted, blushed and coughed her throat.

Iehisa; who had completely forgotten about that, after the battle, she had something to confess; was shaking in endurance.

Using the chance that Yoshihiro was still covering her face with her both hands out of embarrassment, Iehisa jumped to Yoshiharu's knees, sitting on them a "pop."

*"Whoa, that scared me! What is it, Iehisa?"*

*"Nyaa nyaa! Sagara. Have you forgotten your promise with me?"*

*"Promise? Ah, yes, I remember. After the battle ends, you have something to say to me, was that it?"*

*"Fufu. So you remember it. You are a good man, Sagara!"*

*“I have already heard that.”*

*“It’s serious, but it’s my feelings. Chuu~!”* [Please remember that the period, question mark, and exclamation point are the Three Musketeers of Punctuation. Ending it with a tilde is awkward as fuck]

*“W-What?”*

*“My Iehisa is kissing a man, aaaaaah-.”* Yoshihiro fainted.

*“I’ve never expected for someone to suddenly make a love confession during a war council. Such extremity from the armed battle faction! I who think too much wouldn’t have any chance to compete!”* Toshihisa trembled.

*“Go, Iehisa-chan! Coax Sagara Yoshiharu and take him to the Shimazu family! Iehisa is a true wicked woman to try to take the lover of the world’s ruler! Yoshiharu has a value of 100 million koku!”* Yoshihisa cheered for her.

Speaking of men, Tokuchiyo who had no experience of having a friend other than her male pet bear let out a scream, *“Fueeee,”* that was hard to comprehend. [Rishia-chan, go back to Itsuki!]

... But of course, there was a princess general who was enraged by Iehisa for stealing a march, her hair raised up to the heavens.

It was Yoshihi who had taken up a position next to Yoshiharu.

*“A-Are you an idiot, Shimazu Iehisa?! Doing such a selfish action to Yoshiharu without my permission as his onee-sama! Yoshiharu is Oda Nobuna’s lover!”*

*“Hehe. Be it war or love, those who take the initiative win!”* [A fuqing clever bastard. This is why Waterloo was a debacle]

*“Wha-Wha-Wha—”*

*“Sagara Yoshihi. I don’t know whether Oda Nobuna will be worried or not. But you, who used the excuse of being Yoshiharu’s ancestor to become his elder sister, are no doubt my enemy.”*

*“... U-U-U-U-U-Ua...”*

Yoshiharu saw it for the first time. The calm and serious Yoshihi was bewildered, *“The face has been peeled off,”* and her appearance went to a tearful face which was suitable for girls of her age.

*“A-A-A-Aneue, calm down! This is no god, no good at all!”*

*“I won’t permit this, Shimazu Iehisa! Your kiss! I will overwrite and cancel it!”*

*“Aneue, you should not...”*

*“Eh? Yoshihi? Please wait a moment! That’s bad... GYA!”* [Imagine an innocent maiden getting thrust for her first night]

*“Yoshiharu, what’s up with that ‘gyaa?!’ Do you hate being kissed by me? You rude fellow!”*

Yoshihi who had lost her temper kissed Yoshiharu’s cheek.

*“Nyaa nyaa!”*

Iehisa screamed.

*“Wow, she really did it!”* Yoshihisa let out a shout of joy.

*“Yoshiharu will disappear!”* Toshihisa was greatly perplexed.

*“His women trouble has come out after such a long time. Everything has come to naught. Farewell, my master. I will never forget you,”* Goemon who hid herself in the ceiling clasped her hands together for a prayer.

*Am I seriously going to suddenly disappear because of this absurd accident? This death like a miserable joke is unpleasant! Nobunaaaaa!*

*“Eh? Oh no!”* The moment Yoshihi’s mind recovered, the kiss was already finished.

*“I have no immunity towards love stories,”* Yoshihiro was completely thrown to chaos. *“One bear, two bears, three bears...”* Along with Tokuchiyo who started to count bears for some reason.

However.

No matter how much bears Yoshihiro counted, Yoshiharu did not disappear. [Yep, too great that ‘much’ has become more appropriate than ‘more.’]

*“What? Why haven’t you disappeared? That story that a man from the future like you would disappear if I make you marry Yoshihi was a thoughtless speech. My belief that a man from the future doesn’t exist is correct. Ha, ha, ha. But your plain face that looks alike with Hikaru Genji’s is strangely irritating. Moreover... My imoutou... Iehisa...”*

*“Anyway, you are a liar,” Yoshihiro blushed, pinching Yoshiharu’s cheek. Yoshiharu who had almost fainted returned, ‘Eh,’ to sit.*

*“Why? Why didn’t I disappear? Goemon in the ceiling. Please explain.”*

*“Nin nin. I myself don’t understand at all. Let’s just say that more troubles have been added.”*

*“Wonderful...” Yoshihi sighed in relief.*

*“In other words, Yoshiharu. Even if I kiss you, the contradiction of infinite cycle will not appear.”*

*“Ah! Aneue, you have just exchanged a written oath about stepping down from the seat of the Sagara Clan’s head, right? Because I wasn’t originally meant to be the head of the Sagara Clan, perhaps it has changed aneue’s fate. In other words, Yoshiharu is no longer the direct descendant of aneue since you aren’t the present head of the clan anymore. Yoshiharu has become my direct descendant because I am the present head of the Sagara Clan! Therefore, even if aneue kisses him, the contradiction won’t happen.”*

*“What? Is that true, Tokuchiyo? Then I will try again. This time, it’s lips to lips.”*

*“Y-Yoshihi? There isn’t any elder sister who kisses her younger brother on the lips! Oii, what are you doing?”*

*“Be quiet! Japan was born through the union of the brother and sister gods Izanagi-no-Mikoto and Izanami-no-Mikoto! There is no problem. Be grateful that I’ll give you my first kiss. Chuu. Oh, so you haven’t disappeared even if I do it like this.”*

*“Uwoooooo, definitely this time! This time I will disappear...! Why haven’t I disappeared?”*

*“Hooray, aneue! You have overcome fate! I am looking forward for Yoshiharu and aneue’s offspring!”*

*“Humu. Even if he has a face like a monkey’s, because I am pretty, Tokuchiyo’s distant offspring will be unbearably cute. But this will be an indirect kiss with Tokuchiyo... Kapuchu.”*

*“Eek~. Aneue!”*

*“Nonono, wait a second. After all, this logic is ridiculous in various ways. It has more of an unpalatable feeling than the former logic.”*

*“Nyaa?” Iehisa, who was wincing, heard Yoshiharu’s scream and noticed something sudden.*

*“This woman! She has just done something outrageous under the confusion! She is unexpectedly evil-minded!”*

*“Hoo? I haven’t done anything remotely despicable. Yoshiharu is a little embarrassed because he is still a boy, I am glad because he actually wants to be spoiled by his onee-sama.”*

*“Nyaa nyaa nyaa... Using her position as the elder sister to cling around Sagara... A nastily troublesome love rival has appeared! Sagara Yoshihi, we will take your neck!”*

*“Same to you, prepare yourself who have made me infuriated!”*

*“Wait a second. In the case that it will become a fight with my cute Iehisa, then I, the Takegami Shimazu Yoshihiro, will naturally assist her imouto! In the first place, I could never permit Sagara Yoshiharu’s lips to be stolen in deceit! Is this the new life you have found?! To live as an unruly elder sister who seduces her younger brother?! What’s with you! This is cowardice towards a samurai’s honor!”*

*“Ara. Shimazu Yoshihiro. Have you fallen in love with my younger brother too? This is laughable. Because Yoshiharu prefers a noble and graceful maiden like me rather than a big-breasted girl like you whose merits are only in fighting and martial arts. It’s better if you give up early.”*

*“I-I-I am n-n-n-never being like t-t-t-that, no way!”*

*“Nyaa! Yoshihiro-nee-chan has become an enemy?”*

*“Iehisa, don’t get ensnared by this woman’s plan!”*

*“This is bad, this is bad. If I bring Yoshihi to Honshu and meet Nobuna. It will turn into a quarrel between mother-in-law and Nobuna...” Yoshiharu felt more dead than alive.*

During the intense fight between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law that had broken out, Yoshihisa and Toshihisa nodded.

*“There is a rumor that Sagara Yoshiharu gathered up a lot of cute girls as his ‘younger sisters’ in his hands because Oda Nobuna would come to kill him if he has an affair with other maidens.”*

*“It seems to be true. The word ‘elder sister’ seems to be a blind spot, onee-sama.”*

*I swear to Buddha-sama, I haven’t done such a thing to Oda Nobuna!* Yoshiharu thought so.



## Interlude

Kitanosho Castle, Shibata Katsuie who was expectantly waiting for the Etsu forces didn't know yet.

The one that stopped Kenshin was a letter from her former sworn friend Sakihisa Konoe.

Kenshin who took up a position alongside the Tedorigawa [Tedori River], *"Should I cross the river,"* was hesitating.

*It was said that Sagara Yoshiharu went to Kyushu as a messenger to Otomo Sorin.*

Despite being proud of her own unrivaled invincibility, it was Sagara Yoshiharu who cornered by the use of psychological warfare, information warfare, and the men of Kawanamishuu.

Even if Sagara Yoshiharu was absent and the Oda army got thoroughly crushed, it couldn't be said as a complete victory.

Kenshin was fastidious.

A letter from Sakihisa Konoe had arrived to Kenshin.

*"Is it the kampaku Konoe-sama? He was formerly the central figure of the first Anti-Oda Coalition that moved the Azai-Asakura Alliance and Honbyo Temple, but I've heard that the Honbyo Temple surrendered and became an ally of the Oda Clan."*

The aide Naoe Kanetsugu was in doubt. For Kenshin, Sakihisa Konoe had been once a comrade-in-arms, as both of them had once rushed through the Kanto Plain.

Sakihisa Konoe, who was earnestly trying to reinstate the Yamato Imperial Court that had fallen to ruin, found Kenshin, who visited the capital, as a kindred in spirit; it was a relationship by which the two of them exchanged a written oath to regain Kanto together.

*"Kanetsugu. I, who had succeeded the family headship of the Uesugi Clan to be the Kanto Kanrei, was hesitating to assume the position of the Kanto Kanrei since I was just a person of the Nagao Clan, which was a vassal clan of the Uesugi Clan. But Sakihisa Konoe persuaded me. The revolt of Taira Masakado. The Genpei War. The conflict of Muromachi Shogunate and the Kanto Shogunate. The disorder of the world has always occurred in the opposition that arose from Kanto and the capital. I who am the daimyo of Echigo should restore order in Kanto now. To restore order to the Kanto region which has been disarrayed by unrest, I must become the Kanto Kanrei, and with the Kampaku to become a new official of the Kanto*

region. With this, both the Yamato Imperial Court and Ashikaga Shogunate's authority will be revived in Kanto."

"From Kampaku to Kanto's official. I have heard the story from my father but that is impossible. The warriors of Kanto who possess the spirit of Takeshi [militaristic nature], they don't seem to respect a noble as their leader. Even if it's Kanto's official."

"Of course. There is misgiving. The black-toothed Maro will be looked down by the warriors of Kanto. So Konoe threw away his proud, noble appearance. For the sake of restoring the Yamato Imperial Court, he trained his body like a samurai and became a master of falconry, swordsmanship, horse riding, and archery. He threw away his black teeth and white-painted face and took a samurai's appearance. Even though he is a Kampaku, he took up a sword, rode on a horse and embarked to Kanto"

"Even so, the blood lineage of the ruler of nobility cannot be changed. The warriors of Kanto rejected it, and Konoe-sama's dream of assuming the position of Kanto's official has ended in failure."

"Indeed. At the same time when he failed to become Kanto's official, my position as Kanto Kanrei became something in name only. The Kanto expeditionary force that the kampaku brought over from the capital was torn apart. Of course the responsibility isn't only Sakihisa Konoe's, but also my responsibility. A lot of things happened in the 1<sup>st</sup> Kanto Expedition, and I had no choice but to give up capturing Odawara Castle."

"...Kanto's feudal lords had participated as allies and became attached in succession, but then they all felt betrayed because of the betrayal and the expedition force's collapse. I have heard it from my father: Kenshin-sama's beauty brought ruin."

"The relationship between me and Sakihisa Konoe was doubted, and many people defected to the Hojo Clan. Hojo Ujiyasu might have used the Fuma ninjas to spread out such rumor. Konoe and I were naïve. People can't live with only pure will. Yet, there were things like people's feelings. Just by brandishing a great cause won't make people devoted. Back then, Konoe and I might have been just children. As for me, I kept on dispatching troops in order to accomplish my duty as the Kanto Kanre. Konoe gave up the dream to become the court noble who stood on the top of the Kanto region; he returned to the pragmatic approach towards the hegemony over Kinai from the back through deceit, which is a tradition of court nobles. As for me, who am short-tempered and fastidious and don't succumb to the evil customs of the capital and beautiful dreams, a court noble must fight so that the princess general will also fight; Konoe was to be blamed. And so, we parted away."

"Could it be that Konoe-sama hated the very sight of Oda Nobuna all this time while keeping proximity?"

*"You can say that. It is written in the letter. Appealing as a former comrade who once fought together with me in the Kanto region, he implored to me to hold the advance for a while..."*

Kenshin folded the letter gracefully and closed her eyes.

*"Wait for what? And wait for how long?"* Naoe Kanetsugu leaned her body forward.

*"Konoe told me this, "This is not only about achieving victories in battles, but I want you to fight for the sake of world domination. A Christian kingdom has already been born in Kyushu. There is no time left for Japan." Who the winner is is not the biggest problem. World conquest. This is the conclusion of justice that Uesugi Kenshin has gambled and pursued for her lifetime. Don't be obsessed over victory or defeat under one's nose; abandon that obsession of being undefeated and invincible. He himself threw away the dream of restoring the Yamato Imperial Court and went over to his bitter enemy Oda Nobuna."*

*"If the disturbances in Japan continue, the influence of Namban would keep intervening in succession. By then, it couldn't be undone. The war in Japan must be ended through the effort of Japan's people. Konoe-sama has known that through Oda Nobuna and allied himself with his former enemy."*

*"...Perhaps, it was like that. In Echigo, where the Nambans don't visit over, it's a story that I can't experience. At this time, I wonder what Sagara Yoshiharu is doing in Kyushu..."*

*"Kenshin-sama. We have our army waiting to advance on any moment. What is its relation with world subjugation?"*

*"There is. According to the analyzed report of the information that was eavesdropped from the monkey, the visions of both Oda Nobuna and Kobayakawa Takakage are nearly identical."*

*"That is?"*

*"Daimyos all over the world will gather for one big battle royale to decide the ruler of the world. It will be a large scale war that has never been seen in the history of Japan. As for those two people, for this Sengoku era that has lasted for 100 years, they will not let it end after just a century; they will end it in one big decisive battle."*

Kanetsugu swallowed her saliva. *Such competition has never been heard before.*

*"Where will it take place?"*

*"At the center of Japan."*

*“To put it shortly, Tokaidou [East Sea Circuit], Tosandou [Eastern Mountain Circuit], Hokurikudou [Northland Circuit], San'yodou [Southern Mountain Circuit], San'indou [Northern Mountain Circuit]; it is the place where the end point of each of these circuits is located. It's near the vicinity of Azuchi.”*

*“Yes. The one who conquered Azuchi Castle is the one who will reign over the whole country. There is a day of distance from Azuchi to the capital, Kyoto. With this easy-to-understand strategic objective, there is no other clear bait.”*

For the Anti Uesugi-Takeda, the Azuchi Castle was built for the purpose of fulfilling two or more objectives at the same time. Oda Nobuna hadn't envisioned this decisive battle from the beginning; it's probably something thought according to intuition. Something like an inspiration to build a castle for the one who'd reign over the whole country. At first, the inspiration had been but a small seed. When Azuchi Castle was completed, and with repeated sieges, it brought further flashes of ideas, growing into a concrete strategy. Oda Nobuna was a genius, and Kobayakawa Takakage's was in the same wavelength with Oda Nobuna's talent.

Naoe Kanetsugu nodded. Instead of a word, Kenshin took a biwa on her hands and played a graceful tune quietly.

*“I will keep my pace with my arch nemesis Takeda Shingen. Because Takeda Shingen is a woman who ignores the ideas of Oda Nobuna and Kobayakawa Takakage. Because she is a woman who follows only her own will. I cannot help but to adapt myself to Shingen.”*

*“But, Kenshin-sama. What if Takeda Shingen causes the war to extend for another 100 years because of her own actions?”*

*“At that time, I will stop Shingen for justice; even if I am no longer the incarnation of Bishmamonten, my faith will not waver until the last. I live for justice and do things according to justice. In any case, because my physical strength is already near its limit. This may be the last battle of Uesugi Kenshin, Kanetsugu.”*

*“After I fell down, you will...”* Kenshin was smiling.

*“No. Kenshin-sama won't die yet. There is still the dream of spending a day at Azuchi Castle.”*

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According to Nobuna's calculation, the impatient Uesugi Kenshin would hasten her forces to the capital. On the contrary, the too careful Takeda Shingen would stick to the Mikawa-

Totomi front and be in stalemate against the Matsudaira army, and their visit to the capital would be delayed.

To the news of Azuchi Castle's completion, Kenshin was rushing up; Shingen ought to be careful.

Nobuna herself did not have a complete concept of gathering the military power of several daimyos from the pro-Oda and anti-Oda factions, Uesugi, Mori, Matsudaira, Ukita, and others for a "decisive battle" on the plain in Azuchi Castle's vicinity. But she understood one thing. That was, to settle the dispute of the whole world during this Sengoku era, Takeda Shingen must be delayed as much as possible.

Therefore, there was a need to have a gap between the marching speeds of Kenshin and Shingen. Delaying Shingen and hastening Kenshin.

Furthermore, it was also necessary to adjust the marching speed of Kobayakawa and Kikkawa in the same Mori forces. Making Mitsuhide stop Kikkawa to the very limit and allowing Kobayakawa to reach the battlefield first. Kobayakawa Takakage should have thoroughly read Nobuna's plan; siding with Nobuna's idea of "settling it in one battle" and coming along as the enemy. When it was possible, it would be led to the battlefield immediately, and positions would be taken up there. But Kikkawa musn't come. Certainly, before strategies were ready for action, victory would go to the one who made the first move. Therefore, Mitsuhide needed to seal her off and put her in one place so that Kobayakawa's army could go ahead.

But, removing the fact that Mitsuhide fell in a crisis at Tamba against Kikkawa's forces, the biggest problem was Shingen. In any case, Shingen and Kenshin must not work together. If Shingen and Kenshin were to cooperate as allies at the battlefield, it'd be impossible to defeat them, even if Nobuna, Hanbei, and Yoshiharu racked their brains for it.

Oda Nobuna hurriedly departed from the Echizen front and stopped Kenshin's advancement, together with Takigawa Kazumasu who mobilized 3000 Teppo troops and entered Shitarahara where Matsudaira Motoyasu had camped. The reason was to deceive them that they were eager to settle it in a decisive battle against Shingen.

But on that day, *"Launch an all-out attack against Nobuna and the raccoon. I will pay dearly to exterminate the Oda-Matsudaira allied forces and go to the capital quickly,"* Shingen declared so to her Four Devas.

Baba Nobufusa, Yamagata Masakage, and Naito Masatoyo of the Four Devas remonstrated Shingen. *"Oda Nobuna seems to have brought over a large number of Tanegashimas from her camp," "The Oda Clan pulverized the Mori navy with their Tekkosen. This must be a trap to surmount the Takeda cavalry."*

Since it [Takeda's cavalry] had been soundly defeated by Murakami Takeyoshi through that "crumbling grindstone," there wasn't any case that Shingen was determined to end a war like this before.

*"What happened, Shingen-sama? It's said that the Tanegashimas of the Oda-Matsudaira allied forces are numbered 3000 as maximum. In addition, the enemies has taken a position in a strange formation that has never been seen before. It's raining now, but it will soon stop. Let's make haste."*

Shingen did not nod at Kosaka Danjo's proposal.

*"No. Before the rain stops, we must launch an all-out attack to the enemy line. Once the weather clears up, even if it's the Takeda cavalry, they will be unharmed, and it won't be possible to overcome a barrage of 3000 Tanegashimas. The Teppo troops that should've turned to Hokuriku region, surely everything of it has been put in here. Without the rain, there won't be any chance to win."*

*"Kenshin, why are you being slow? When it's raining, the Etsu forces has overwhelming advantage,"* Shingen who muttered irritatingly had an impatient look on her face.

*"What has made you like this, Shingen-sama. Your complexion is weird."*

Shingen answered Yamagata's question.

*"I have received a letter again from father."*

The Four Devas simultaneously looked at each other.

*"What does it seem to be? The thing that Shingen-sama's father is saying."*

*"Shingen-sama banished him once in the past; hasn't Takeda Nobutora's whereabouts been still unknown until now? That person is very dreadful! Let's escape."*

*"That kind of thing again?"*

*"...Well... As expected..."*

The Four Devas bowed to Shingen.

*"I am sorry everyone for being quiet about it. When I reconciled with my arch nemesis Kenshin, 'Aren't you going to the capital? Becoming the one who reigns over this country and hoists the flag of Takeda on the land of Seta while your father is still alive.' It's because I have received a scolding in the letter from father. Right now, father is hiding in Kyoto. Hojo Ujiyasu has made father to take up a brush to send a letter to me. It must've been done that way, because there is no other way that I won't be reconciled with Kenshin."*

*“Then, the one who roused the Azai-Asakura alliance and Honbyo Temple during the first Oda Encirclement before was...”*

*“...Sakihisa Konoe... Didn't make that plan...”*

*“That impatient, quick-tempered and ambitious kampaku won't be able to make such a long-term strategy like this. Influencing the monks of Eizan and Sugitanii Zenjubou is the limit of the kampaku. Father who had pursued after Suruga and went to the capital, seems to have become a strategist under Konoe's shadow. Father used the chance when I was in an impasse with Kenshin at Kawanakajima to take the initiative against Oda Nobuna to enter the capital and form the encirclement by using the Azai-Asakura alliance and Honbyo Temple.”*

*I did not notice that. By receiving affection from Sagara Yoshiharu, I have given a chance for Oda Nobuna to subjugate the Azai-Asakura alliance and destroy the first encirclement. “A child can't understand a father's heart. You are always a troublesome and foolish daughter,” I was scolded by father with the letter. And now, father split with Konoe, who approached the Oda Clan, and joined Ashikaga Yoshihi, who is staying in the Mori Clan and involved with the tactician Hojo Ujiyasu, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Oda Encirclement was established...*

*“Kenshin subjugated Hokurikudou with the momentum of her ire, breaking down the Oda army and forcing them back to Echizen. There is just a little distance to Azuchi Castle. Once the Gunshin (God of War) Uesugi Kenshin decides to invade another country, it has been proven that she could rule the whole world much earlier than the Takeda Clan. If the Takeda Clan did not block her way in Kawanakajima, and if Kenshin were freed from the duty of Kanto expedition as the Kanto Kanrei, Kenshin could've gone to the capital at anytime. On the other hand, the Takeda Clan who is facing an opposition at Shitarahara can't invade Mino and Owari. Now, the Takeda Clan can no longer have any time for leisure or childish thinking. The 2<sup>nd</sup> encirclement that father has established is a plot to let Uesugi Kenshin go to the capital.”*

*“Any more lack of filial piety can't be repeated, but I don't want to force you to launch an attack in a desperate battle; I am shaking now,” Shingen unusually complained in front of the Four Devas. It was obviously the face of the delicate girl Takechiyo who had unmasked the masquerade called Takeda Shingen.*

*“As for the former Four Devas of Takeda whom I inherited from father, everybody has died. One was killed in the battlefield, one committed suicide under the charge of rebellion. Even my younger sister Nobushige who acted as my aide-de-camp has died. I let everyone die. I still regret it everyday. The new Four Devas that I have found and brought myself, I don't want you all to follow the same fate. That is why I have been cautious in expanding my territories. Even if the Battle of Kawanakajima fell to an endless cycle, it would never be a lost battle. If I challenged Uesugi Kenshin to a decisive battle for an honorable death, it'd be an extremely painful thing to realize. But...”*

*“Shingen-sama. Please don’t burden yourself anymore. We are the lord’s lieges. It’s our mission, pride and the worth of our life to fight for the lord! This Naito Masatoyo is prepared to die for the lord at anytime!”*

*“Ever since this Kosaka Danjo served Shingen-sama for the first time a long time ago , I have been and am willing to die as a general of the Takeda Clan. I want to escape, but I won’t.”*

*“My Aneue – Obu Toramasa of the former Four Devas did not die on the battlefield but as a rebel. It is certainly a regrettable thing for someone among the Four Devas who is devoted to war. Therefore, as for me, I would like to carry the battle flag of the Takeda Clan upon my back and die on the battlefield. Because it would be the manner of death that my Aneue longed for.”*

While Naito, Kosaka, and Yamagata were encouraging Shingen with their own ways, only Nobufusa Baba said things differently.

*“...Shingen-sama. Please don’t insult us the Four Devas. I am the immortal Baba Mino. For every past battle, there hasn’t been any scratches on me. On the pride of my samurai family, swearing to the flag – the shield, I absolutely will not die earlier than Shingen-sama.”*

She who rarely showed her feelings, Baba who had never spoken about her own opinion was now saying things she impossible would’ve talked before. She defied Shingen. She was angry at Shingen. She stood up and severely scolded Shingen like an older sister.

*“... I will take one character from Shingen-sama’s real name ‘Harunobu’ to my own name Baba Nobufusa and change it; I will introduce myself as Baba Nobuharu. Shingen-sama mutually exchanges names with that person at Kawanakajima before. Names of ‘Kenshin’ and ‘Shingen.’ However, for me, for all this time with Shingen-sama... From the time I first served Hime-sama, I’ve always had the same dream with Hime-sama. ‘Harunobu’ and ‘Nobuharu,’ it’s not surprising to introduce ourselves with those names to each other. Bestow upon me the authority for the first and the last time.”*

*“Baba. Are you...”*

Baba accepted the role the vanguard, bowing to Shingen and leaving her seat in the war council.

*“I will take the whole Takeda cavalry in a charge against the enemies’ side at Shiatarahara before this rain stops,”* Shingen declared her decision. [Death flag]

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*“Kichi-neesama. Why are we in Shitarahara? Should you not be in Echizen?”*

*“I’ve brought 3000 Teppo troops here when Kenshin have been idle. Knowing that I’ll participate in this battle will make Shingen be more careful, Takechiyo.”*

Against the Takeda army that had surrounded Nagashino Castle, Matsudaira Motoyasu as a reserve force was sent to build a camp at Shitarahara. Motoyasu was delighted with Nobuna’s unexpected help; furthermore, the works increased as she had been tasked to quickly build a peculiar and huge encampment.

*“Uum, what on earth is this drawing? Is this really the formation for the battle?”*

*“Shingen has a habit for being too cautious. This is to drive out suspicion!”*

After Nobuna returned to her position, Takigawa Kazumasu and Matsudaira Motoyasu quickly joined her and formed a large camp at Shitarahara. *“Don’t leave your formation. Don’t get caught in Takeda’s provocation,”* Nobuna repeatedly instructed the Teppo troops that she brought from Echizen to stay at their positions. On this day, they didn’t expect the Takeda army to put their combined efforts in an attack.

*“it’s coming! Under the drizzle, the drum of Suwa is resounding!”* The Mikawa soldiers changed their expressions and began preparations for war.

*“Awawa! Hanzo-san. Far from being suspicious over the Teppo troops and the camp, Shingen has become motivated! The rain. The rain has become an obstacle! Is this strange camp that Nobuna-neesama irresponsibly has built for the defense of the Teppo troops? If this continues, we’d just be sitting ducks!”*

*“Good news, Hime. Honda Masanobu who had brought back his relative Honda Tadakatsu and participated in the “Neko Rebellion” left Mikawa. On the way back to Hime, he had disappeared again, and finally returned.”*

*“Oh? Yahachirou? Have you come back this time? Really?”*

*“Yes. Because the brave general – Tadakatsu had been absent from the Matsudaira Clan for a long time, it made a huge blow to our army. Really, being a vassal of this clan is nothing but troublesome. This is mainly because there is no unifying force. Always thinking small-mindedly about making money. Though it should’ve been able to become independent from the Imagawa Clan, it wrecked my nerves, and it’s hard to understand why you still remain calm while being made an errand boy to Oda Nobuna. And despite not being a merchant, day by day, continuously buying and selling, buying and selling small husks of grains to get a small income. With this, why did I show interest to Sagara Yoshiharu’s proposal at Okehazama? In retrospect, the Imagawas are better than the Odas.”* [Masanobu Honda addresses herself with “sessha.”]

*“Ah, Yahachirou! My best friend! You came back to save us from predicament! It’s like that, right? Never again throw away the Tanuki-sama and covert for something like the Nekogami!”*

*“You didn’t listen to my complaint! Honda Masanobu has brought a person who needs to meet Hime by all means. There is some time needed to pick that person up. I’ll bring her together with me”*

*“Who is it? Did you mean, Yahachirou’s manzai partner? That’s right, it’s because the skit performance tournament has been postponed while Honbyo Temple’s stronghold is being relocated. Yahachirou wants to use this chance to spread skits at Mikawa and earn money! In order to steal joke materials about skit performances, Yahachirou daringly infiltrated Nyankosou!”*

*“It’s different!”*

At the next moment, Motoyasu was astonished.

*“I am Serata Jirou Saburou.”*

That’s because a young girl who exactly resembled her appeared in front of her eyes.

*“You, what on earth? You totally look like my twin!”*

Serata Jirou Saburou, next to Motoyasu’s childhood friend – Honda Masanobu who served her, declared thus,

*“I’ve come to replace Matsudaira Motoyasu as the last “Supreme Ruler of the World” of the Sengoku era as Tokugawa Ieyasu.”* [What a chuuni.]

## Epilogue

Otomo Sorin who had declared to build the Kingdom of God in Hyuga left Bungo with an army numbering 50,000 thereabouts in total.

*"I don't take part in religious wars,"* a lot of veteran generals, such as Tachibana Dosetsu who was the cornerstone of the Otomo army, expressed their stubbornness and didn't participate in the war. In actuality, they pretended to check the sneaky approach of the third force of Kyushu – Ryuzoji of Hizen. The core of this expeditionary force which was organized by the Christian princess general who worshipped the virgin saint, Otomo Sorin: *Lily Crusade*.

The Otomo army, marching as they hoisted a banner with a brilliant white cross, destroyed Shinto shrines along their way for the religious as they progressively thought up of strategies for the anti-Shimazu war.

The legendary land of Takachiho which was said to be the place where Amaterasu-no-Okami had descended from heaven was kept in check by the Otomo army; the Otomo army gained impetus and overwhelmed Northern Hyuga.

Otomo Sorin built a camp in Mushiga of Hyuga.

The name Mushiga derived itself from the Namban word *musica* or music to its equivalent kanji character. Sorin herself felt that this name was worthy for the Kingdom of God and named it as so.

The capture target was Takajo Castle which had continued to be an important base of the Shimazu Clan in Southern Hyuga. The number of soldiers who were protecting Takajo Castle was only 500.

When Takajo Castle had fallen, the Shimazu army would be forced to withdraw from Hyuga.

However, Shimazu Yoshihisa who had quickly reconciled with Kai Soun at Hibikinohara gathered a reserve force numbered 40,000 from every place to reinforce Takajo Castle. By making the Sagara Clan as their subordinate clan, succeeded in reconciling with their powerful enemy—Kai Soun—and for the first time, they were able to execute their strategy by sending all of the Shimazu army from the two sides of Higo to Hyuga. Furthermore, not to mention Takegami—Yoshihiro—the head of the clan Yoshihisa herself, who rarely went to the field, had come forward to lead the soldiers.

At the improvised Namban church which had become the main camp in Mushiga, a war council was held. Two strategists were next in line to Sorin's left and right. One person was the

Namban missionary who had foreseen the future by using a Platonic solid—Gaspard. And the other one was a female strategist—Kuroda Kanbei.

*“Thanks to Simon for taking the command, I am saved. I can quickly invade and attack the uninhabited place here. Really, Simon is a genius.”*

*“Yes. It was a wonderful command like clear, flowing water, Don Simon.”*

*“Sim. From now, this Simon will help Sorin as a strategist of the Otomo Clan.”*

*“You forgot our first purpose. To willfully lead the Otomo army to gain a territory without permission; this is the same as rebelling against Nobuna-sama. Furthermore, Yoshiharu-san is in the Shimazu army. With the way things are going, you will fight against Yoshiharu-san,”* Louis Frois who accompanied this expeditionary force admonished Kanbei, but Kanbei was engrossed with the concept of having a decisive battle against the Shimazu army and ignored Frois’ words without hesitation.

*“Say no more, Frois. If the Otomo Clan is defeated in this battle, Oda Nobuna will be checkmated; we need to have a certain victory. However, because there are a lot of vassals that don’t obey commands from Gaspard who is a Namban, Simon is taking command. By no means, isn’t the reason why I got the role of a strategist because I’d received 120,000 Nakatsu Castle’s stones from Sorin?”*

*“If we do not stop the Mori Clan’s advancement towards Akechi-sama, and if Akechi-sama falls, then Nobuna-sama will...”*

*“Mufu! It’s alright; when this Simon seriously commands the Otomo army, then the fight for the hegemony over Kyushu will be a child’s play! I will rout the Shimazu army with a swift attack, and then return to invade the Mori Clan! While Oda Nobuna is fighting a decisive battle at Honshuu, Simon will conquer the lands from Kyushu to Chugoku in one fell swoop!”*

*“At this rate, Yoshiharu-san and Simon will have to fight a decisive battle at Kyushu! Why did this happen...”* Frois looked up to the sky.

*“Fufufu. I knew. It was told by Gaspard. There is only misfortune in the future that Simon follows. Cunning rabbits die, good dogs are boiled. Simon works as a strategist for the sake of world conquest, always neglected by the person who rules over the whole nation and smoldered at Kyush. There is a chance for the biggest decisive battle to happen in Honshuu, and instead, I am tasked with sweeping over Kyushu which is fit to be called a second-rate region! But! It’s no longer the story about the distant future of Oda Nobuna! If Oda Nobuna, Takeda Shingen, and Uesugi Kenshin fought in a decisive battle at Honshuu; the victory can’t be decided in one day! The time to obtain Kyushu is now! Oda Nobuna is a unique schemer who is exploiting the opportunity from the battles at Honshuu to suppress Kyushu! This Simon has no ambition for the world; the chance to obtain Kuroda Ichiryuu is now!”* [Recheck the whole paragraph]

*“But, isn’t Nobuna-sama’s Tenka Fubu the stage for proving Kuroda Ichiryuu? Two people who share their will should be a comrade. With this, Simon-san will be suspected of conspiring with the Otomo Clan and become isolated in Kyushu without permission when the master falls into predicament. It will become according to the anecdote of the Chinese general—Han Xin! It will be an ending where “the cunning rabbits die and good dogs are boiled.” Before that, if the war with the Shimazu Clan is prolonged, then Nobuna-sama will be overthrown by the anti-Oda Alliance!”*

*“Mufu. There is no intention of betraying Oda Nobuna’s favor. Because I do things diligently, there is no worry. Oh, if Oda Nobuna perishes then Simon will succeed the foundation that Oda Nobuna has laid and lead the Otomo Clan in suppressing the whole country at that time! At any rate, I have been nominated directly by Gaspard, “If anything should happen to Oda Nobuna, the owner of talent who is suitable as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Prester John is you.” Being a number one is heart-breaking.”*

*“Yes. If we win this, we can rescue Oda Nobuna who is besieged by the allied forces. But because it is an extremely difficult task to change the world’s future, I have considered the worst thing and prepared a substitute. Indeed, the talented Simon-kun is appropriate as the substitute; as for the destruction of the Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples, just leave it to me,” Gaspard calmly smiled as he poured wine to Sorin.*

*“Simon-san. What are you going to do with Yoshiharu-san who is staying in Shimazu’s camp?”*

*“Mufu. Frois. Isn’t that fellow a traitor? Why will a messenger of peace for the Otomo Clan stay at the Shimazu camp who will be fighting against the Otomo Clan? Besides, be it Sagara Yoshihi or Shimazu Iehisa, haven’t you heard that he is collecting a large number of local wives when Oda Nobuna is not looking around? The Shimazu Four Sisters are unanimously trying to become his wives and fighting each other. He really is a worthless cheater. Simon needs to chastise him, hahahaha!”*

*“No, it’s a misunderstanding. Yoshiharu-san is just trying to increase his comrades. A fellow countryman of Zipangu is not an enemy for that person who came from the future. Such is the origin of Yoshiharu-san’s strange charm...”*

*“Really? Kobayakawa Takakage and Uesugi Kenshin, every princess general whom that guy is trying to win over to take side with the Oda Clan, haven’t they become powerful enemies of Oda Nobuna in the competition over Yoshiharu?”*

*“If you want us to assist Oda Nobuna, you must cooperate with us, Frois. Sagara Yoshiharu has broken through the 2<sup>nd</sup> trap that I prepared and has now become a senior statesman of the Shimazu Clan subsequently. He seemed to have done things a little too much.*

*Now, he is a person who must be excluded for the sake of Oda Nobuna's continuation of political power," Gaspard said with a smile.*

*"This is not according with the promises," Frois protested, but Gaspard, "Still, he has yet to appear in front of me and Sorin-sama," didn't back down either.*

*"Oda Nobuna is running out of time already. He will exit from the battle over the center stage of history at last. The cooperation of the Shimazu Four Sisters and the man from the future—Sagara Yoshiharu—is strong, but if it's Simon then this will be accomplished."*

Frois made a sign of the cross and grieved. An uneasy situation had occurred. Grasping the hearts of the people by inspiring their unhappy future, it was an inexcusable act. Was it possible to change Kanebi whose mind was controlled by Gaspard?



*“The strategist Kuroda-han got herself deceived and didn’t notice that she already enacted a rebellion. Furthermore, she conspired with a schemer with a technique to predict the future. This is the biggest crisis for Sagara-uji, de-gojaru,”* Goemon who had been hiding under the church’s roof, her red eyes glowing, disappeared silently.

**Fine**

